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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Reading habits in Scotland circa 1750-1820

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Vivienne Dunstan

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READING HABITS IN SCOTLAND
circa 1750–1820

Vivienne Seonaid Dunstan

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
at the University of Dundee, February 2010

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables	2
List of Figures	3
List of Graphs	4
Acknowledgements	5
Declaration and Statement	6
Abstract	7
Chapter 1: Introduction	8
Chapter 2: Accessing reading material	25
Chapter 3: Reading in the context of daily life	48
Chapter 4: What people were reading	76
Chapter 5: Styles of reading and reasons for reading	125
Chapter 6: Book ownership and reading	152
Chapter 7: Conclusions	200
Bibliography	210
Appendix 1: Creation of databases	241
Appendix 2: Digital copies of databases	on CD

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: REI classification scheme for subject matter	22
Table 2: Occupational structure of Hawick Subscription Library subscribers circa 1810	34
Table 3: Occupational structure of Arbroath Subscription Library subscribers in 1804	34
Table 4: Booksellers with stock detailed in after-death inventories	80
Table 5: Top subjects stocked in Ebenezer Wilson's bookshop in 1788	81
Table 6: Top titles in Ebenezer Wilson's bookshop in 1788 based on numbers of copies stocked	82
Table 7: Most popular titles at Selkirk Subscription Library, 1799–1814	99
Table 8: Changing occupational balance of Gray Library borrowers	102
Table 9: Borrowings of occupational groups at Gray Library, 1790s–1810s	104
Table 10: Number of different titles Rev. Mr George Ridpath read (1755–1761) analysed by subject	108
Table 11: Number of different titles Elizabeth Rose of Kilravock read (1775–1780) analysed by subject	112
Table 12: Number of different titles Professor Robert Hamilton read (ca1790–1829) analysed by subject	115
Table 13: Number of different titles William Lyon Mackenzie read (1806–1820) analysed by subject	119
Table 14: Occupations of book owners found in Dumfriesshire inventories	160
Table 15: Categorising occupations of book owners in Dumfriesshire inventories	160
Table 16: Owners of books by key Enlightenment authors found in Dumfriesshire inventories	167
Table 17: Owners of various magazines found in Dumfriesshire inventories	169
Table 18: How frequently named magazines appear among Dumfriesshire book owners	169
Table 19: Subjects of books owned present in each decade in the Dumfriesshire inventories	172

Table 20: Larger book collections found in Dumfriesshire inventories	173
Table 21: Occupations of book purchasers in Meuros account book	181
Table 22: Categorising occupations of book purchasers in Meuros account book	181
Table 23: Most popular periodicals in Meuros account book	183
Table 24: Siblings collecting schoolbooks in turn per Meuros account book	186
Table 25: Larger-scale purchasers in Meuros account book	188
Table 26: Professor Robert Hamilton's physical storage of books by subject	194

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Chapmen in Scotland between 1750 and 1820 with surviving wills or inventories	40
Figure 2: Sir David Wilkie's 'The Cotter's Saturday Night' (1837)	65
Figure 3: From Poems by Robert Burns (Edinburgh, 1801)	65
Figure 4: Subjects of volumes in Forfar Library, 1795	85
Figure 5: Subjects of volumes in Dundee Public Library, 1803	85
Figure 6: Most frequently borrowed books at Gray Library, decade by decade	93
Figure 7: Comparing popular books at Gray Library, male versus female borrowers	95
Figure 8: Sequence of borrowings from Selkirk Subscription Library in 1809	97
Figure 9: Subjects borrowed at Selkirk Subscription Library, 1799–1814	100
Figure 10: David Allan's 'The Connoisseurs' (1780)	175
Figure 11: Variety of subjects read by Professor Robert Hamilton	190
Figure 12: Variety of subjects owned by Professor Robert Hamilton	191

LIST OF GRAPHS

Graph 1: Borrowings by subject at Gray Library, 1732–1816	90
Graph 2: Decade-by-decade numbers of borrowings and borrowers at Gray Library, 1732–1816	92
Graph 3: Borrowings by month at Gray Library, 1732–1816	130
Graph 4: Numbers of book owners dying per decade found in Dumfriesshire inventories	159

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Both of my parents have been a great help throughout my history studies, both at Dundee and before. In addition I want to thank my secondary school history teacher, Ian Landles at Hawick, who at an early stage set my class a school project to produce a family tree, which was the prompt for my own journey of historical research, leading me to visit archives in the Borders and Edinburgh from a young age. But the greatest thanks of all must go to my husband Martin, who understands the challenges of doing a PhD more than most people, particularly when long-term ill as I am, and has been a rock throughout.

DECLARATION

I, Vivienne Seonaid Dunstan, am the sole author of this thesis; that, unless otherwise stated, all references cited have been consulted by me; that the work of which the thesis is a record has been done by me, and that it has not been previously accepted for a higher degree.

Signature:

STATEMENT

I confirm that the conditions of the relevant Ordinance and Regulations have been fulfilled.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines reading habits in Scotland between circa 1750 and 1820, a subject surprisingly little studied by historians before, given the backdrop of the Enlightenment, and traditional ideas about Scottish education and literacy. From a methodological viewpoint, reading as an activity at this time is often little recorded, frequently invisible in surviving historical records. Nevertheless, enough evidence exists for it to be studied analytically, using individual case studies alongside larger data sets, and varied records such as contemporary accounts and later memoirs, library catalogues and borrowing registers, and evidence for book ownership, such as after-death inventories and records of booksellers. To aid the analysis, a three-part subject classification system is introduced in this thesis to differentiate between different categories of reading—religious, entertainment and improvement—and to facilitate comparisons between individual examples of reading.

Successive chapters explore how opportunities for reading evolved, how Scots fitted reading into their lives, what they chose to read, their reasons for reading and styles of reading, and book ownership and its relationship to reading. Each of these chapters explores a particular aspect of reading habits in more detail than has been done before. The final concluding chapter collates the evidence to explore the wider question of change over time. In particular, it argues for the growth of reading, a dramatic change in the subjects people chose to read—specifically the growth of improvement and self-education reading—and a marked permeation of reading throughout Scottish society by the end of the period, not being confined to the leisured classes. In addition, distinctive aspects of Scottish reading during this period are highlighted and discussed, and Scotland compared with England. Overall, the importance of reading to Scottish people during this period is clear, providing a valuable insight into Scottish minds and attitudes two centuries ago.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis examines book usage and reading habits in Scotland between circa 1750 and 1820. It reassesses the evidence for reading as an activity, placing particular emphasis on its role in people's lives, and makes extensive use of evidence directly linking identifiable named readers with what they were reading, particularly books. Such a focus on direct evidence for reading differentiates this study from past research which has tended to study providers of reading material such as booksellers and publishers. Identifying the readers makes it easier to draw valuable conclusions about the role of reading in their lives and how typical they were of other similar individuals living at the same time, and thus what general conclusions can be extrapolated from these individual examples. Overall this thesis aims to uncover to what extent personal reading habits in Scotland changed during this period. Related themes explored include the significance of urban culture, variation by social class, and the influence of contemporary phenomena such as the Enlightenment.

One challenge with this research is to integrate effectively the differing questions of book history and wider historical debates. Book history—the history of books and reading in general—is a relatively new area of research, although its roots can be traced back to much earlier research into bibliography and books as physical artefacts.¹ Although some modern book history research still focuses on books as artefacts, including for example their bindings, a relatively early trend was to consider the role of books in people's lives and what this tells us about their interests and mentalities.² Much of the pioneering work in the field was done in Continental Europe, particularly in France and Germany, by Engelsing in the 1970s and Chartier and Darnton in the 1980s, the first investigating the reading habits of German town-dwellers, the latter two considering the role of books in pre-revolutionary

¹ Such origins are reflected in the early journals addressing book history, particularly bibliographical ones such as the *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* (started 1904).

² See for example the archive of back issues of *Studies in Bibliography* at <http://etext.virginia.edu/bsuva/sb>

France.³ In subsequent decades, increasing numbers of historians worldwide started to investigate the history of books and reading in their national contexts, typically aiming to compare the local reading habits they found with those elsewhere. Frequently cited, for example, is the gradual shift during the 18th century from an intensive to a more extensive form of reading, and an increasing secularization of subject matter: what has become known as Engelsing's 'reading revolution'.⁴ Typical would be a reader circa 1700 who might have a Bible which he read repeatedly, but little access to other reading material. By 1800 or so an equivalent reader might still have access to a Bible at home but would be reading a broader range of material, whether of his own or borrowed from local libraries or from friends and relatives. Was this a local phenomenon or part of a wider worldwide trend? Other historians have sought to quantify the reading experience, investigating for example the extent of book ownership and library usage.⁵ Such research depends upon the existence of suitable source data, and a recurring trend in the historiography is the elusiveness of reading, only glimpsed occasionally in the historical records in an era long

³ R. Engelsing, *Der Bürger als Leser: Lesergeschichte in Deutschland 1500–1800* (Stuttgart, 1974); R. Chartier, *The Cultural Uses of Print in Early Modern France* (Princeton, 1987); and R. Darnton, 'Histoire du Livre, Geschichte des Buchwesens, An Agenda for Comparative History', *Publishing History*, Vol. 22 (1987), pp. 33–41.

⁴ J.V.H. Melton, *The Rise of the Public in Enlightenment Europe* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 89–92. Historians still debate this 'revolution' though, including its speed, timing, and the true diversity of reading practices—see I. Jackson, 'Approaches to the history of readers and reading in eighteenth-century Britain', *Historical Journal*, Vol. 4 (2004), p. 1050; and D. Finkelstein and A. McCleery, *An introduction to book history* (New York and Abingdon, 2005), p. 113.

⁵ For book ownership R. A. Houston, *Scottish Literacy and the Scottish Identity: Illiteracy and Society in Scotland and Northern England 1600–1800* (Cambridge, 1985), p. 171 cites examples from around Europe but mainly from the 16th and 17th centuries. Inventory studies of books from the 18th and 19th centuries include Chartier, *Cultural Uses of Print*, pp. 184–189; J. de Kruif, 'Classes of readers: Owners of books in 18th-century The Hague', *Poetics*, Vol. 28 (2001), pp. 423–452; R.G. Cárcel, 'La posesión del libro en la Cataluña del Antiguo Régimen', *Bulletin Hispanique*, Vol. 99 (1997), pp. 135–160; H. Grönroos and A.-C. Nyman, *Boken i Finland ... 1656–1809* (Helsinki, 1996), reviewed in *Scandinavian Studies*, Vol. 70 (1998), p. 112; and M. Robert, 'Le livre et la lecture dans la noblesse canadienne 1670–1764', *Revue d'Histoire de l'Amérique Française*, Vol. 56 (2002), pp. 3–27. Library studies include L.-G. Harvey, and M. Olsen, 'A Quantitative Study of Book Circulation: The Library of the Institut-Canadien de Montréal', *Historical Methods*, Vol. 18 (1985), pp. 97–103; and M. Olsen, and L.-G. Harvey, 'Reading in Revolutionary Times; Book Borrowing from the Harvard College Library, 1773–1782', *Harvard Library Bulletin*, New Series Vol. 4 (1993), pp. 57–72.

before large-scale surveys of reading habits.⁶ Nevertheless, evidence can be found: diaries placing reading in the context of daily life, lists of books read by individuals, library borrowing records, and evidence of book buying and book ownership. Typically a combination of micro and macro studies is needed, and even the richest sources need a sensitive mix of quantitative and qualitative techniques. Book ownership, for example, is sometimes probed using a quantitative study of after-death inventory records combined with detailed consideration of individual examples. At the other extreme, studies of individual records of reading such as diaries usually have access to such a limited number of examples that a careful qualitative study is the only suitable approach. This is despite initiatives such as the Reading Experience Database in Britain which are attempting to gather as many examples of such primary sources as possible: the resulting examples are still too scattered to allow any type of meaningful quantitative approach.⁷ Despite such problems a number of historians have used evidence of reading as a guide to the mentalities of readers in the past, including Hall in America and others.⁸ In all cases though, care is needed to work with the limited available examples, including considering of whom they were reasonably representative.

Research into book history has typically been concerned with how far book use and reading can be uncovered from the historical records, and what variation is seen in different countries throughout time. Local factors must be taken into account however, and exploring such book history questions in Scotland of the late 18th and early 19th centuries involves examining a society in a state of major flux. One of the major changes of the time

⁶ For discussions of the challenges of such research see Jackson, 'Approaches to the history of readers and reading', pp. 1041–1054; and L. Price, 'Reading: the State of the Discipline', *Book History*, Vol. 7 (2004), pp. 303–320.

⁷ The Reading Experience Database 1450–1945 is a multi-university project with a web presence at <http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/RED/> For warnings about pitfalls of the quantitative approach see S. Eliot, 'Very necessary but not quite sufficient: a personal view of quantitative analysis in book history', *Book History*, vol. 5 (2002), pp. 283–293.

⁸ D.D. Hall, 'Books and Reading in Eighteenth-Century America', in C. Carson, R. Hoffman and P.J. Albert (eds.), *Of Consuming Interests: The Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century* (Charlottesville & London, 1994), pp. 354–359; D.D. Hall, *Cultures of Print: Essays in the History of the Book* (Boston, Massachusetts, 1996), pp. 170–172; and R.L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York, 1993), pp. 282–287.

was urbanisation: a shift from rural dwelling to urban living, and the growing importance of towns as cultural centres.⁹ It has been estimated for example that in the 1750s approximately 9% of the population lived in towns, a proportion that rose to 32% by 1850.¹⁰ This level of urbanisation was on a scale little-matched anywhere else in Europe and since opportunities for reading were focused in towns they were becoming increasingly important.¹¹ Scotland was also unusual in this period because its population was perceived to be highly literate by contemporary standards.¹² In addition this was the era of the Scottish Enlightenment, a major cultural movement where Scottish thinkers and writers produced books that influenced the world.¹³ Finally this period saw the growth of the middling sort throughout Britain, both as receptors and drivers of cultural change.¹⁴ How significant was this change for reading habits?

Taking all of the above factors into account, therefore, Scotland in the 18th and early 19th centuries provides a particularly interesting context to study reading habits and book usage. It is surprising then that there has been so little prior research into reading habits in Scotland in this period. In contrast, most past Scottish book history research in this era has focused on providers of books—the publishers, printers and booksellers—with far less

⁹ This has been little commented on in the Scottish historiography. P. Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance: Culture and Society in the Provincial Town 1660–1770* (Oxford, 1989) is the classic English text on this, although there is debate over how closely the Scottish experience matched England's, including chronologically.

¹⁰ T.M. Devine, 'Urbanisation', in T.M. Devine and R. Mitchison (eds.), *People and Society in Scotland: Volume I: 1760–1830* (Edinburgh, 1988), p. 28. However I. Maver, 'Urbanisation', in A. Cooke, I. Donnachie, A. MacSween, and C.A. Whatley (eds.), *Modern Scottish History 1707 to the Present: Volume 1: The Transformation of Scotland, 1707–1850* (East Linton, 1998), p. 154 observes that this measure of urbanisation underestimates its extent in Scotland because it is based on a criterion of a population of at least 10,000, and many Scottish towns had populations below this. For Europe-wide statistics see J. de Vries, *European Urbanization 1500–1800* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1984).

¹¹ This has been little commented on in the Scottish historiography. P. Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance: Culture and Society in the Provincial Town 1660–1770* (Oxford, 1989) is the classic English text on this, although there is debate over how closely the Scottish experience matched England's, including chronologically.

¹² But see Chapter 2 for a more detailed discussion of the literacy debate.

¹³ See for example A. Broadie, *The Scottish Enlightenment: The Historical Age of the Historical Nation* (Edinburgh, 2001).

¹⁴ This aspect has been little commented on in a Scottish context but for elsewhere see J. Barry and C. Brooks (eds.), *The Middling Sort of People: Culture, Society and Politics in England, 1550–1800* (Houndmills, 1994) and P. Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People, England, 1727–1783* (Oxford, 1989).

study from the perspective of readers.¹⁵ Such a shortfall is particularly remarkable given the pioneering research by Kaufman in the 1950s and 1960s.¹⁶ Kaufman studied the development of libraries throughout Britain, including surveying in detail available Scottish library catalogues, considering which types of books were provided by which libraries, and also examining a number of the rare surviving borrowing registers, themselves useful guides to who the borrowers were.¹⁷ In the process, he identified a number of valuable sources and questions which could have been further explored comparatively over subsequent years, such as who the libraries were catering for and what books these readers were reading. Few researchers tackled them apart from Houston, who more recently considered the role of reading in the context of literacy throughout 18th century Scotland; and Crawford, who developed Kaufman's survey of library development, probing societal libraries such as subscription libraries, considering the growth of libraries to the present day, and gathering information about surviving Scottish printed library catalogues.¹⁸ In addition, Alston collected references to pre-1850 Scottish libraries from many sources, including noting which libraries have surviving records, some of which were overlooked by Kaufman and could provide the basis for useful research by future historians.¹⁹ Yet although such records were known to exist they were ignored by researchers for many decades. More recently, at the same time as the research described in this thesis, Towsey

¹⁵ R.B. Sher, *The Enlightenment and the Book: Scottish Authors and their Publishers in Eighteenth-Century Britain, Ireland, and America* (Chicago, 2006); F.M. Thomson, 'John Wilson, an Ayrshire printer, publisher and bookseller', *The Bibliothek*, Vol. 5 (1967–1970), pp. 41–61; S.W. Brown, 'William Smellie and the Printer's Role in the Eighteenth-Century Edinburgh Book Trade', in P. Isaac and B. McKay (eds.), *The Human Face of the Book Trade: Print Culture and its Creators* (Delaware, 1999), pp. 29–44; and R.B. Sher and H. Amory, *From Scotland to the Strand: the Genesis of Andrew Millar's Bookselling Career*, in P. Isaac and B. McKay (eds.), *The Moving Market: Continuity and Change in the Book Trade* (London and Delaware, 2001), pp. 51–70. In addition the Scottish Book Trade Index is gathering information about these people online at <http://www.nls.uk/catalogues/resources/sbti/>

¹⁶ Many of Kaufman's papers have been reprinted together in P. Kaufman, *Libraries and their Users: Collected Papers in Library History* (London, 1969).

¹⁷ P. Kaufman, 'The Rise of Community Libraries in Scotland', *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, vol. 59 (1965), p. 265.

¹⁸ Houston, *Scottish Literacy*, pp. 163–178; J.C. Crawford, 'The origins and development of societal library activity in Scotland', unpublished MA thesis (University of Strathclyde, 1981); J.C. Crawford, 'Historical models of library provision: the example of Scotland', unpublished PhD thesis (Glasgow Caledonian University, 1993); and J.C. Crawford, 'The bibliography of printed catalogues issued by publicly available libraries in Scotland 1765–1930: an analysis of the database', *The Bibliothek*, Vol. 23 (1997), pp. 27–48.

¹⁹ <http://www.r-alston.co.uk/scotland.htm>

completed a concurrent PhD investigating the reception of the Scottish Enlightenment in provincial Scotland.²⁰ Although this utilised a number of records of reading, including overlapping records such as library borrowing registers, Towsey's focus was not on reading habits as such but rather focused upon people reading key Enlightenment texts. Towsey's thesis contributes particularly to Scottish intellectual and Enlightenment history, although it also makes a valuable contribution to the study of reading.

Taking this combined historiographical backdrop into account, this thesis assesses a blend of book history and wider social history questions. From the book history side comes the underlying methodological question: to what extent is it possible to recover book usage and reading habits of Scots in this period and what picture emerges? In other words, how did people fit reading into their daily lives, what were they reading, and what were the different purposes to which they put books? Related questions are which sectors of society are better represented in the surviving evidence, and how closely do trends in Scottish reading habits compare with those in other countries? From the wider historical debates come three further relevant thematic questions. How much was urban culture an influence on reading habits during this period of rapid urbanisation in Scotland? How much was reading a phenomenon that varied by social class, including the rising middling sort? How important were contemporary influences such as the Enlightenment? Finally, and encompassing all of the above subsidiary questions, is the fundamental question explored in this thesis: to what extent did personal reading habits in Scotland change during this period, in what ways, and what is the significance of this?

Ready availability of relevant source material facilitated the research. Scotland is comparatively well served in terms of surviving evidence for reading. This is particularly the case with evidence for libraries that Kaufman highlighted. Printed library catalogues

²⁰ M.R.M. Towsey, 'Reading the Scottish Enlightenment: Libraries, Readers and Intellectual Culture in Provincial Scotland c.1750–c.1820', unpublished PhD thesis (St Andrews University, 2007).

survive most frequently, having been printed for use by library users in the past.²¹ In other cases, manuscript catalogues exist, sometimes recording in chronological order books bought for the library.²² Occasionally minutes of the managers of the libraries can be found, giving an insight into how the libraries were run. Sometimes the membership might be recorded in a list of members, or perhaps printed in the irregularly issued library catalogue.²³ However the most valuable library records for studying what people were actually reading are the lending registers, recording the books issued and who they were issued to. These records exist for only a few libraries in Scotland, indeed rarely anywhere worldwide, but they include two early free public libraries: Gray Library in Haddington and Innerpeffray Library in Perthshire. Kaufman examined the late 18th century lending registers of both, looking at 1732–1796 for Gray Library, and 1747–1800 for Innerpeffray.²⁴ Although he seems to have recorded the borrowings of each reader, Kaufman only published overall figures for numbers of books borrowed and numbers of readers.²⁵ More recently Houston published a more detailed analysis of the Innerpeffray lending records, including the borrowings of some readers, but he only looked at 1747–1757.²⁶ Lending patterns of these two libraries are particularly valuable as a guide to reading tastes of Scottish people in general because, as free libraries, they were potentially accessible to many people in their local communities, unlike some other libraries which restricted users more, such as subscription libraries restricted to a select group of

²¹ Crawford, 'Printed catalogues', pp. 27–48.

²² An example of such a chronological record is the handwritten catalogue of Arbroath Subscription Library, 1797–1844, Angus Local Studies Centre, MS 451/2/1.

²³ For example a list of members of Duns subscription library in Berwickshire is printed in its 1789 catalogue: *A catalogue of books in the subscription library at Dunse* (Edinburgh, 1789). Manuscript records of this library (including minutes and accounts) from 1768–1850 are held in the present-day Duns Public Library.

²⁴ Kaufman, *Libraries and their Users*, pp. 153–162; and Kaufman, 'The Rise of Community Libraries in Scotland', pp. 265–268 and 269–271. These libraries were available to all in their local communities without cost (Gray Library restricted to residents of the burgh of Haddington). Both were founded by legacies: Innerpeffray Library by David Drummond, third Lord Madertie in 1680, and Gray Library by Reverend John Gray of Aberlady near Haddington in 1717.

²⁵ Kaufman, 'Innerpeffray', pp. 154–158; and Kaufman, 'Rise of Community Libraries', pp. 265–268.

²⁶ Houston, *Scottish Literacy*, pp. 174–178.

subscribers, or university libraries only available to an academic elite.²⁷ For this thesis, the Gray Library borrowings were analysed in detail, and the Innerpefferay Library borrowings to a lesser extent, to provide a useful comparison and control. Circulating libraries, often run as a side-line by local booksellers, are commonly thought to have offered the most widespread access to low-cost print material in local communities in Britain.²⁸ In England, Fergus studied lending records of a 1770s Warwick circulating library.²⁹ Only one Scottish circulating library from this period has left any borrowing records, namely Robert Chambers' library in Edinburgh for 1828.³⁰ Unfortunately its borrowings can be difficult to analyse due to the cryptic abbreviations used to record the items borrowed, and therefore this library and its borrowings were, regrettably, not analysed for this thesis. Another category of Scottish library in this period is the subscription library, particularly strongly associated with the middling sort. The Selkirk Subscription Library borrowing records for 1799–1814 provide a useful comparator to the free library borrowings. Private house libraries, however, were not analysed: such records are scattered across Scotland, including many still in private hands, and it was not practical to examine them.

In terms of scale, surviving library borrowing registers and evidence of book ownership offer the opportunity to study the greatest number of readers at once. Yet while Scottish borrowing records have been partially probed, book ownership has been little explored so

²⁷ Thomas Carlyle's borrowings are recorded in two sets of lending records from Edinburgh University: C.P. Finlayson, 'Thomas Carlyle's borrowings from Edinburgh University Library 1819–1820', *The Bibliothek*, Vol. 3 (1961), pp. 138–143; and I. Campbell, 'Carlyle's borrowings from the Theological Library of Edinburgh University', *The Bibliothek*, Vol. 5 (1967–1970), pp. 165–168.

²⁸ J. Feather, *A History of British Publishing* (London, 1988), p. 99.

²⁹ J. Fergus, 'Eighteenth-Century Readers in Provincial England: The Customers of Samuel Clay's Circulating Library and Bookshop in Warwick, 1770–1772', *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, Vol. 78 (1984), pp. 155–218; and J. Fergus, *Provincial Readers in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford, 2006). It is possible that local readers were borrowing books from other circulating libraries or other places, but Clay's lending rates were so low-cost that he would be expected to have attracted a large share of the local readership, attracting individuals of varying means.

³⁰ NLS MS Dep.341/413, Library Ledger, Chambers Circulating Library (1828). For a later period the National Register of Archives lists records for 1886–1970 (minutes and an issue book) for Strichen Circulating Library held by Aberdeenshire Library and Information Service. From an earlier period McDonald surveyed circulating libraries in north-east Scotland, based largely on references in the *Aberdeen Journal*—W.R. McDonald, 'Circulating libraries in the north-east of Scotland in the eighteenth century', *The Bibliothek*, Vol. 5 (1967–1970), pp. 119–137.

far.³¹ Most attention to date has focused on printed lists of subscribers: people who placed advance orders for new publications and were thus included in lists of names printed inside some books.³² Yet subscription lists are only a rough guide to book ownership since most books were not sold in this way. In addition, knowing that an individual bought one book is little guide to their wider buying practices.³³ Given this, more comprehensive records of book ownership are appealing: for example after-death inventories of personal possessions which have been used to investigate book ownership in Europe and America.³⁴ Such records survive for Scotland but have been under-explored so far by book historians.³⁵ Other records that can be usefully probed for evidence of book ownership include records of individual booksellers, particularly those rare examples of detailed account books, and lists of books among private family papers.³⁶

Scottish library records and book ownership have each been investigated to some extent but far less use has been made of contemporary Scottish accounts of reading—whether autobiographical (such as diaries, letters and memoirs) or descriptions by others (for example articles by journalists or fictional depictions). The sole exception to this is the 1755–1761 diary of Rev. Mr George Ridpath, minister of Stichel in Roxburghshire. This

³¹ J. Crawford, 'Reading and book use in 18th-century Scotland', *The Bibliothek*, Vol. 19 (1994), pp. 23–43 and R. A. Houston, *Scottish Literacy*, pp. 163–178 review prior research into reading in 18th century Scotland.

³² W. Zachs, *The First John Murray and the Late Eighteenth-Century London Book Trade* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 68–70 describes the process of publishing by subscription. Relevant studies are R. E. Jones, 'Book owners in Eighteenth century Scotland: a note on subscription lists in books edited by John Howie', *Local Population Studies*, Vol. 23 (1979), pp. 33–35; and P. Laslett, 'Scottish weavers, cobblers and miners who bought books in the 1750s', *Local Population Studies*, Vol. 3 (1969), pp. 7–15.

³³ J. Feather, *The Provincial Book Trade in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 44–68 describes the variety of ways in which books were distributed through the provincial book trade.

³⁴ Houston, *Scottish literacy*, p. 171 cites examples from around Europe but mainly from the 16th and 17th centuries. Inventory studies of books from the 18th and 19th centuries include Chartier, *Cultural Uses of Print*, pp. 184–189; de Kruif, 'Classes of readers'; Cárcel, 'La posesión del libro en la Cataluña del Antiguo Régimen', pp. 135–160; H. Grönroos and A.-C. Nyman, *Boken i Finland ... 1656–1809* (Helsinki, 1996), reviewed in *Scandinavian Studies*, Vol. 70 (1998), p. 112; and Robert, 'Le livre et la lecture dans la noblesse canadienne 1670–1764', pp. 3–27.

³⁵ After-death inventories have been underused by Scottish historians in general, though research may increase now that the records are digitised and more easily searched.

³⁶ In some cases existing catalogues (on paper or computerised form) can highlight the relevant records; in others it is a chance find among a laborious manual search.

source was noted by Kaufman and others, but always discussed not as evidence for an individual's reading habits, but to reconstruct the contents of the nearby Kelso Public Library.³⁷ Researchers who mention this diary usually refer to the editor's introduction and summary of Ridpath's reading habits, but do not analyse his reading habits in-depth, nor set them against the reading patterns of other individuals or findings from sources such as library records.³⁸ Yet contemporary accounts such as Ridpath's provide an opportunity to rediscover a more holistic view of the reading habits of Scots, wherever they obtained their reading matter from, and whenever they read it. As an example of this, Dorothy Wordsworth observed during her visit in 1803 that reading was commonplace in Scotland, even among the poorer folk, an observation highlighting the importance of reading throughout Scottish society, and one which should have prompted further enquiry by historians before now.³⁹ Other contemporary accounts sometimes record what the readers thought about what they were reading as well as why they were reading it. Other aspects of Scottish reading habits which can be inferred from such sources include the significance of borrowing books from family or friends, something revealed in contemporary diaries or letters, and discussed in more depth in the next chapter. Outside Scotland, researchers have used such sources to probe reading practices and to reconstruct areas under-represented by surviving sources.⁴⁰ Yet in Scotland they have been overlooked, despite their potential to give a unique insight into the reader's perspective.

³⁷ J.B. Paul (ed.), *Diary of George Ridpath Minister of Stichel 1755–1761* (Edinburgh, 1922). Ridpath probably borrowed most of his books from Kelso Public Library which has no surviving catalogues from his period, hence the value of a substantial record of local reading, like Ridpath's.

³⁸ Paul, *Diary of George Ridpath*, pp. xi–xiv. Researchers citing this include Crawford, 'Reading and book use', p. 35; and Kaufman, 'Rise of Community Libraries', pp. 247–248.

³⁹ Wordsworth's journal of her 1803 Scottish tour contains many references to reading, such as a shepherd sitting in the fields reading while his flock fed nearby — J.C. Shairp (ed.), *Recollections of a Tour Made in Scotland A.D. 1803 by Dorothy Wordsworth* (New York, 1874), p. 23.

⁴⁰ Specific examples include A. Baggerman, 'The Cultural Universe of a Dutch Child: Otto van Eck and his Literature', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 31 (1997–1998), pp. 129–134; S.M. Colclough, 'Procuring Books and Consuming Texts: The Reading Experience of a Sheffield Apprentice, 1798', *Book History*, Vol. 3 (2000), pp. 21–44; J. Desforges, 'Satisfaction and Improvement: A study of reading in a small Quaker community 1770–1820', *Publishing History*, Vol. 49 (2001), pp. 5–48; and M. Powell, 'Taking Stock: The Diary of Edmund Harrold of Manchester', in B. McKay, J. Hinks and M. Bell (eds.), *Light on the Book Trade: Essays in honour of Peter Isaac* (London, 2004),

Another overlooked category of evidence for Scottish reading habits are lists of books read by individual readers—not the partial lists pieced together from scattered diary entries, or the result of analysis of library borrowing registers, so much as the dedicated lists kept by readers recording what they read over a period of time. They sometimes even recorded where the items were obtained from, whether borrowed from friends or libraries, or whether they were owned by the reader. Such reading lists from this period survive only occasionally anywhere in the world, sometimes among private family papers, sometimes in public archives.⁴¹ They provide an opportunity to look at an individual reader's reading in detail, to study it for change over time, and to analyse the books read by subject. There are a number of such reading lists in Scotland spanning the 1770s through to the 1820s, mostly not studied before, either individually or as a group as in this thesis. Commonplace books were not analysed for this thesis, principally because commonplace books provide a very incomplete record of reading, only recording extracts from some of the titles read.⁴²

This period in Scottish society is peculiarly well worth studying in terms of what people were actually reading because of the combination of the Enlightenment, rapid urbanisation, the growing importance of the middling sort, high literacy, and major world events such as the Napoleonic wars. Of these, the Enlightenment is most relevant to reading habits, given the importance of print for communicating ideas; and has attracted much attention from scholars in the past, particularly focused on elite members of society.⁴³ Yet, as Munck

pp. 37–50. For general comments on using this category of evidence see S. Colclough, 'Recovering the reader: Commonplace books and diaries as sources of reading experience', *Publishing History*, Vol. 44 (1998), pp. 5–37

⁴¹ It is likely that there are more surviving still to be found, despite their rarity.

⁴² In the early stages of the research the commonplace books of Mary Eleanor Bowes, Countess of Strathmore and Kinghorne (1749–1800) were examined—Box 243 in the Strathmore muniments. However doing so confirmed the practical difficulties of working with such records to try to determine wider reading practices. However for an example of the potential of such records, even if they do not record all items read, see M. Towsey, 'An Infant Son to Truth Engage: Virtue, Responsibility and Self-Improvement in the Reading of Elizabeth Rose of Kilravock, 1747–1815', *The Journal of the Edinburgh Bibliographical Society*, Vol. 2 (2007), pp. 69–92.

⁴³ It is surprising that this context has not prompted more research into reading in this period, but most research into the Scottish Enlightenment has focused on major cities, particularly Edinburgh, or studied elite individuals with limited investigation of its impact on other parts of society or what people at the time were actually reading. For examples of this traditional approach see R.B. Sher, *Church and university in the Scottish*

argues, the Enlightenment should not be considered solely as a matter for the privileged, but rather as something relevant to all sectors of society, since all sectors of society read, and were influenced to varying degrees by contemporary movements and ideas, facilitated by a growth in print material and changing subject matter.⁴⁴ Indeed the Enlightenment was particularly notable for its promotion of intelligent, sceptical and rationalist enquiry, intellectual activities which could be supported by reading, and not just restricted to the leisured classes. The focus of this thesis was, however, not the Enlightenment, but rather on reading habits in general, with the Enlightenment discussed where appropriate, but not taking centre stage. The chronology studied is therefore somewhat different from that which would typically be studied for a pure Enlightenment study, extending from the mid 18th century through to the early decades of the 19th century, since it follows a dramatic growth in the print trade in Scotland. The end of the period catches the start of Scott's Waverley novels, a Scottish publishing phenomenon worth examining from both the viewpoint of Scottish readers and their particular tastes in reading.⁴⁵ From a book history perspective, the time-span is appealing because it is long enough to look for change in reading habits over time. It also eases comparisons with research into reading habits in other countries.

The research described in this thesis was based around three core phases: assessing evidence from the overlooked contemporary accounts such as diaries and memoirs, reassessing library use, and examining the extent and variety of book ownership. The first involved a survey of available diaries and memoirs, particularly in printed form but also manuscript where accessible in local and national archives. The technique used was based

Enlightenment: the moderate literati of Edinburgh (Edinburgh, 1985); A. Hook and R.B. Sher (eds.), *The Glasgow Enlightenment* (East Linton, 1995); and J. Carter and J. Pittock (eds.), *Aberdeen and the Enlightenment* (Aberdeen, 1987). Sher's recent *The Enlightenment and the Book* appears by its title to offer most scope on the role of books for communicating ideas, but focuses instead on relationships between writers and publishers, rather than readers and the books they were reading.

⁴⁴ T. Munck, *The Enlightenment: A Comparative Social History 1721–1794* (London, 2000).

⁴⁵ Much has been written about Scott's reputation in his lifetime and afterwards—for example P.H. Scott, *Walter Scott and Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1981), pp. 5–6. But less has been written about the way that individual readers engaged with his works.

on that described in the literature by a number of historians, particularly those working with the Reading Experience Database project.⁴⁶ A number of micro-level case studies were sifted through to see if recurring patterns of reading emerged from people's daily lives. Several detailed individual reading lists proved to be particularly useful for probing those readers in detail, and for applying quantitative techniques. The second strand of research assessed the available evidence for the use of libraries. Again representative examples were selected from local and national archives. The intention throughout was to find more out about the readers, to put their reading activities into their context. For a number of the libraries, particularly those with only surviving catalogues, this was done at a macro rather than micro level. By contrast, libraries with surviving borrowing records permitted a more detailed study of individual readers and their reading patterns, together with a larger-scale quantitative study of a group of readers in bulk. Kaufman's published library studies formed the basis for much of the approach here, albeit extending the time-scales and questions that he asked, together with a number of other library studies worldwide.⁴⁷ Finally the research examined book ownership in detail, again drawing on examples from national and local archives. Some of the evidence was scattered, and more suitable for a qualitative approach, particularly that found in scattered estate and personal papers in archives. Other evidence was more suitable for large-scale quantitative study, particularly a large-scale case study of books recorded in after-death inventories.

Any study of reading and reading habits in this period has to confront several major methodological challenges. The first is the general invisibility of reading, an activity rarely recorded in surviving records such as diaries and letters.⁴⁸ This means that it is necessary to rely more than normal in historical research on isolated references together with unusually rich individual examples such as Ridpath's diary and dedicated reading lists.

⁴⁶ Colclough, 'Recovering the reader'; and S. Eliot, 'The Reading Experience Database, Problems and Possibilities'.

⁴⁷ J. Fergus, 'Eighteenth-Century Readers in Provincial England: The Customers of Samuel Clay's Circulating Library and Bookshop in Warwick, 1770–1772', *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, Vol. 78 (1984), pp. 155–218; and M. Olsen and L.-G. Harvey, 'Reading in Revolutionary Times; Book Borrowing from the Harvard College Library, 1773–1782', *Harvard Library Bulletin*, New Series Vol. 4 (1993), pp. 57–72.

⁴⁸ Jackson, 'Approaches to the history of readers and reading', pp. 1044 and 1046.

One approach to this is to try to corroborate aspects of reading habits found using such sources, looking for other sources which report similar practices of reading, thus preventing the risk of being misled by isolated atypical references, and successfully teasing out wider trends. Furthermore it is important to be sensitive to the way that individual records were compiled, and which aspects of reading they may be more likely to document reliably, and which less so. Despite such challenges, an informative collection of primary source references were found in this research, and used to draw meaningful general conclusions. The second methodological challenge is how to balance effectively the particular and general. Again, looking for recurring trends provides a solution, wherever possible using evidence from large-scale studies of many individuals, for example library borrowing records and book ownership. Successfully mixing quantitative and qualitative approaches was the third challenge, also tackled by looking for recurring trends, and aiming to corroborate information between the different approaches wherever possible. Overall, the approach relies more than would be ideal on snapshot views and individual examples, making it harder to draw out overall trends than would be best. Nevertheless, examining such source material provides the best possible insight into an aspect of the historical past which would be unrecoverable by any other means.

To aid the analysis throughout the thesis a consistent approach to categorising books and their readers was taken. For books, the contemporary subject categories used by William Lyon Mackenzie (1795–1861) in his own reading list between 1806 and 1820 provided the basis, though Mackenzie's categories were extended in some of the case studies to highlight an unusually high proportion of another subject category of books.⁴⁹ There is no standard category scheme used by researchers of reading, and Mackenzie's categories were chosen because they fit well with the contemporary reading lists and library holdings. Some books could fit under multiple categories, but particular care was taken with such examples, for example books about other countries (travel-focused ones under Travels and Voyages; more dedicated histories under History and Biography), early church histories

⁴⁹ Lindsey, *The Life and Times of William Lyon Mackenzie*, Vol. II, pp. 303–313.

(under Divinity), science/practical books (under Arts, Sciences etc.) and varied collections such as Fielding's (under Miscellaneous). On top of these categories, a higher-level REI classification of reading subject matter was used to estimate the changing proportions of religious books, entertainment books, and improvement books found in reading lists and library borrowing records.⁵⁰ The improvement category consists of books which could inform people about the world and educate them, including history books, reflecting Hume's famous contemporary comment about such books being more instructive than books of amusement.⁵¹ In addition, classics books—sometimes pulled out as a separate category in addition to the Mackenzie ones which form the core—are usually treated as improvement texts, reflecting their potential to educate and inform people. This two-level categorisation system made it easier to examine overall trends over time, and to compare individual readers and groups of readers. Both the REI classification scheme and the underlying subject categories are used extensively throughout chapters 4, 5 and 6.

Table 1: REI classification scheme for subject matter

<u>REI classification</u>	<u>Underlying subject categories</u>
Religion	Divinity
Entertainment	Novels
	Poetry and Plays
Improvement	Arts, Sciences, Agriculture, and Natural History
	Books of Education, &c.
	Geography and Topography
	History and Biography
	Miscellaneous
	Voyages and Travels

Occasionally the 'Miscellaneous' category includes a number of novels, as in William Lyon Mackenzie's own categorisation of his reading, or in the Gray Library borrowings where the few novels stocked were part of multi-volume collections of essays and other

⁵⁰ Records of reading such as reading lists and library borrowing records usually include a minority of titles whose subjects cannot be confidently determined at this distance in time. However the REI percentages computed in this thesis are based on the majority of publications whose subjects can be determined. This subset should be a reliable guide to the overall REI distribution for each case study, and produces REI percentages for the different case studies which can be readily compared.

⁵¹ In E.F. Miller (ed.), *David Hume: Essays Moral, Political and Literary* (Indianapolis, 1987), p. 563.

writings. In such cases the Miscellaneous proportion is split appropriately, and used to compute both entertainment and improvement proportions of the higher-level REI three-part system.

Similarly in chapters 2, 4 and 6 readers are categorised into groups based on their occupations. Historians have used a variety of social classifications based on occupations in the past, usually to classify 19th century census returns.⁵² A relatively simple classification system was chosen for this thesis, reflecting Scottish society in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, and allowing an approximate assessment of people's place in society. The categories chosen were professionals, merchants, artisans/tradesmen, farming/agriculture, gentry, military, servants and unskilled. The professionals category includes solicitors, ministers, schoolmasters, surgeons, lawyers and their families. Merchant is a loose term and could cover both small-scale shopkeepers and richer traders, although the former was more likely to be found in many Scottish communities at this time. Artisan includes brewers, shoemakers, watchmakers and glovers.⁵³ Sometimes individuals could conceivably fall into two categories, for example several merchants among Gray Library's borrowers who acquired estates on the edge of the burgh, and several professionals who became 'new gentry'. Such individuals are categorised in this thesis as merchants and professionals respectively, reserving 'gentry' for older established families. Categorising individuals in this way provides only an approximate guide to social class, but is useful for giving an overview of the composition of a library's subscribers, or for examining the borrowings of different groups among a library's borrowers.

⁵² For discussion of the variety of systems that have been used by historians see B. Waites, M. Drake, and R. Finnegan, 'Chapter 5: Social mobility', in J. Golby (ed.), *Studying Family and Community History 19th and 20th Centuries. Volume 3: Communities and Families* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 91–92 and D. Mills and M. Drake, 'Chapter 3: The Census, 1801–1991', in M. Drake and R. Finnegan (eds.), *Studying Family and Community History 19th and 20th Centuries. Volume 4: Sources and Methods: A Handbook*. pp. 47–50.

⁵³ Artisan includes small businessmen and employees and like the other categories is no guide by itself to incomes and only an approximate guide to social class.

Several large-scale relational databases have been created for this research. The largest two record thousands of borrowings at Gray Library and Selkirk Subscription Library respectively, including details of each item borrowed, its title, and information about the borrower. Other databases concern evidence of book ownership: book references in after-death inventories in Dumfriesshire, and the customers of a Kilmarnock bookseller and their purchases. Building such databases permitted a larger range of queries to be run, helping to uncover broad trends and to set individual examples in context. Appendix 1 describes the creation of these databases. The resulting MySQL data files, approximately 2 million characters in size, are included as electronic Appendix 2 on CD.

The chapters which follow are organized thematically. Chapter 2 addresses the issue of accessibility of facilities for reading including reviewing the growth of opportunities for reading and the consequences for reading habits. Chapter 3 looks at how reading fitted into the daily lives of Scots in this period, including considering who would have had time for reading and contemporary attitudes to the activity. Chapter 4 considers what people read, studying both the general picture revealed by the stock of bookshops and libraries and also evidence left by individual readers in detail. Chapter 5 develops this to consider the manner in which people were reading including examining the case for a shift from intensive to extensive style of reading, and the variety of types of reading found in the historical evidence. Chapter 6 investigates the relationship between book ownership and reading, including the ways in which people built up collections of books. Finally Chapter 7 pulls the threads together to present overall conclusions of the thesis to the core questions.

Chapter 2: Accessing reading material

This chapter considers how people accessed reading material, how this changed over time, and the influence of factors such as locality and social class. It examines the importance of towns in providing access to reading, the changing role of libraries and booksellers, and the importance of books at home. Of these, the growth of libraries and booksellers has been most fully discussed by previous Scottish historians of reading, particularly Crawford, but generally from the perspective of provision rather than its consequences for readers.⁵⁴ Houston considered more fully the issue of book ownership, though more in terms of the practicalities of investigating it rather than reflecting on its consequences for the extent of reading.⁵⁵ Significantly, neither probed the evidence for access to be found in first-hand accounts, whether contemporary writings such as diaries and letters, or retrospective accounts, such as memoirs. Such accounts present direct personal experience of individual readers and have been used by historians in other countries to explore both access to and barriers against reading.⁵⁶ This chapter contends that such reader-focused evidence is too important to be overlooked in a review of Scottish reading habits, and thus integrates it along with the more general picture of the growth of the book trade. It reveals a dynamic picture of access to reading material in Scotland, thus providing a firm foundation for subsequent chapters of this thesis.

It is important not to view access to reading solely in the context of book history, because there are other relevant issues from the wider historical debates. One, for example, is how important towns were to the growth of reading in an era which saw increasing urbanisation throughout Scottish society.⁵⁷ How much did reading opportunities depend on the

⁵⁴ Crawford, 'The origins and development of societal library activity in Scotland'; and Crawford, 'Historical models of library provision'.

⁵⁵ Houston, *Scottish Literacy and the Scottish Identity*, pp. 165–171.

⁵⁶ For a discussion of methodological issues see Colclough, 'Recovering the reader', particularly pp. 21–29. For individual examples see P.L. Fleming, 'Case Study: The Diary of Jane Ellice, Reader', in P.L. Fleming, G. Gallichan, and Y. Lamonde (eds.), *History of the Book in Canada, Volume I Beginnings to 1840* (Toronto, 2004), pp. 182–184; and Colclough, 'Procuring Books and Consuming Texts'.

⁵⁷ Devine, 'Urbanisation', p. 28; and Maver, 'Urbanisation', pp. 155–176.

growing urban network? Another is the implication of the growth of the middling sort, a trend throughout Britain at this time, and whether reading opportunities broke down along class lines.⁵⁸ Finally how significant for changes in Scottish reading opportunities was the impact of the Enlightenment or the Napoleonic wars?⁵⁹

The literacy debate and implications for reading

Fundamental to many people's ability to access books and other reading material is whether they could read.⁶⁰ The issue of literacy in Scotland has attracted some attention from scholars, particularly Houston, who contends that Scottish literacy levels were little better than those elsewhere in Europe, despite the longstanding perception of higher literacy levels in Scotland.⁶¹ However Houston's assessment is based on statistical assessments of writing ability, for example the proportion of people who could sign court documents, with higher levels of literacy among those living in towns than in rural areas, higher levels among professional than working classes, and higher levels among men than women.⁶² Writing ability is no measure of reading ability, not least because reading was taught more widely than writing. As Anderson notes, in his history of Scottish education, many parents at this time were happy for their daughters to learn to read but not to write, hence the importance, particularly in Lowland Scotland, of unofficial 'dame schools'

⁵⁸ This aspect has been little commented on in a Scottish context but for elsewhere see Barry and Brooks, *The Middling Sort of People* and Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People*.

⁵⁹ It is particularly surprising that the Enlightenment context has not prompted more research into reading in this period, but most research into the Scottish Enlightenment has focused on major cities, particularly Edinburgh, or studied elite individuals with limited investigation of its impact on other parts of society or what people at the time were actually reading. For examples of this traditional approach see Sher, *Church and university in the Scottish Enlightenment*; Hook and Sher, *The Glasgow Enlightenment*; and Carter and Pittock, *Aberdeen and the Enlightenment*.

⁶⁰ Although, as discussed later, reading aloud could provide a way around this.

⁶¹ See R. Houston, 'The Literacy Myth? Illiteracy in Scotland 1630–1760', *Past and Present*, Vol. 96 (1982), pp. 81–102; Houston, *Scottish Literacy and the Scottish Identity*; and R.A. Houston and R.E. Tyson, 'The geography of literacy in Aberdeenshire in the early-eighteenth century', *Journal of Historical Geography*, Vol. 17 (1991), pp. 135–145.

⁶² Houston, 'The Literacy Myth?', pp. 94 and 96.

which catered for such groups, in addition to the more formal parish or burgh schools.⁶³ A distinction between reading and writing ability also emerges from Smout's analysis of the Cambuslang revival records of 1742, a collection of interviews of working-class people in rural Lanarkshire who took part in religious conversions and evangelical communions.⁶⁴ All of the Cambuslang men and women who left evidence of their reading and writing ability could read, but only 11% of those women could write and 60% of the men.⁶⁵ In other words reading was far more widespread a skill than writing. Given that the Cambuslang records predate the period studied in this thesis, and that they reflect a rural community where according to Houston's assessments literacy levels would be poor, it bodes well for Scottish reading levels later, and not just in the upper echelons of society.⁶⁶ Not everyone would have been able to read, but the situation would have been far better than Houston's literacy studies imply.

Urbanisation and the spread of the print trade

The growth of importance of towns throughout Scottish society is apparent from demographic statistics. Circa 1750, approximately one in ten of the Scottish population is estimated to have lived in towns, a proportion that rose to one in three by the 1850s.⁶⁷ Towns were becoming increasingly significant in terms of the range of services they provided to the wider community.⁶⁸ Yet despite such dynamic change, much of the focus of Scottish urban historians to date has been on major cities such as Edinburgh, Glasgow

⁶³ R.D. Anderson, *Education and the Scottish People 1750–1918* (Oxford, 1995), p. 8. The variety of local schooling available is also described in T.C. Smout, *A History of the Scottish People 1560–1830* (London, 1985), pp. 420–450.

⁶⁴ T.C. Smout, 'Born Again at Cambuslang: New Evidence on Popular Religion and Literacy in Eighteenth-Century Scotland', *Past and Present*, Vol. 97 (1982), pp. 114–127.

⁶⁵ Smout, 'Born Again at Cambuslang', p. 122.

⁶⁶ For further discussion of the literacy debate in Scotland see A. Cooke, *From popular enlightenment to lifelong learning: A history of adult education in Scotland 1707–2005* (Leicester, 2006), pp. 17–18.

⁶⁷ Devine, 'Urbanisation', p. 28. However Maver, 'Urbanisation', p. 154 observes that this measure of urbanisation underestimates its extent in Scotland because it is based on a criterion of a population of at least 10,000, and most Scottish towns had populations below this.

⁶⁸ This has been little commented on in the Scottish historiography. Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance* is the classic English text on this, although there is debate over how closely the Scottish experience matched England's, including chronologically.

and Aberdeen.⁶⁹ Apart from a number of isolated examples and local case studies, few historians have studied urban culture in provincial Scotland, even though this was where the majority of the town-dwelling population lived.

The growth of publishing was admittedly centred on Edinburgh, to a far greater degree than its population merited.⁷⁰ In the 18th century for example, the number of imprints in Edinburgh accounted for over 70% of the total throughout Scotland.⁷¹ Even by the 1820s, when Glasgow's population had long overtaken the Scottish capital, Edinburgh's imprints were still nearly four times Glasgow's, although the latter was becoming an increasing force in publishing, particularly of religious works.⁷² Elsewhere in Scotland, the number of imprints remained small, although printing began at a relatively early stage in centres such as St Andrews (1550s) and Aberdeen (1620s).⁷³ By the 18th century, provincial presses were printing a mix of reprints and local material but their output was still relatively small. Some historians have argued that the dominance of Edinburgh's printing presses delayed the growth of printing elsewhere in Scotland, particularly in towns with good transport links to the capital.⁷⁴ Whatever the reason Edinburgh dominated the Scottish publishing industry for a considerable period, although imprints from England, particularly those from London and northern centres such as Newcastle, were also significant.

Less dominated by Edinburgh as time went on were Scottish newspapers, although these too were initially centred on the Scottish capital with early titles including the *Evening*

⁶⁹ For example books such as E.P. Dennison, D. Ditchburn, and M. Lynch (eds.), *Aberdeen before 1800: a new history* (East Linton, 2002).

⁷⁰ Looking at the demographic statistics Edinburgh and Leith's population was approximately 4.5% of the Scottish total in 1755 and 6.6% of the total in 1821.

⁷¹ These figures are based on numbers of imprints per Scottish place between 1750 and 1799 recorded in the *Eighteenth Century Short Title Catalogue (ESTC)* on CD-ROM (London, 1992). For more on the growth of the provincial print trade in this period based on such statistics see Mitchell, 'Provincial Printing in Eighteenth-Century Britain'.

⁷² The *Nineteenth century short title catalogue (NSTC). Series 1 & 2: 1801–1870* on CD-ROM (Newcastle, 2002) lists 14,124 imprints for Edinburgh in the 1820s compared with Glasgow's 3,819.

⁷³ These dates are based on the earliest references to printers in these places in the *Scottish Book Trade Index*.

⁷⁴ See for example R.H. Carnie, 'Provincial periodical publishing in 18th century Scotland: the Dundee experience', unpublished paper, Dundee University Archives, KLocF 655.441 31 C 289, p. 7.

Courant (1718) and *Caledonian Mercury* (1720).⁷⁵ By 1750 newspapers were also being printed in Glasgow and Aberdeen; by 1780 in Dumfries; and by 1790 a newspaper was being printed in Kelso.⁷⁶ The greatest expansion of newspapers in this period occurred between 1800 and 1810, with a doubling of the number of Scottish newspapers produced and the places producing them.⁷⁷ In the earliest years provincial newspapers carried limited local information but increasingly by the early 19th century they included a mix of national and local news reports, as well as advertisements from local retailers.⁷⁸ Some provincial newspapers such as the *Aberdeen Journal*, were targeted at extensive geographical areas, while others were more localised; but all served a mix of urban and rural dwellers.⁷⁹

An even more dynamic pattern of growth is seen in the spread of booksellers throughout provincial urban Scotland. Circa 1750 only the largest cities had booksellers together with a number of important provincial centres such as Dumfries, Dundee, Montrose and Perth.⁸⁰ In the following decades booksellers appeared increasingly in manufacturing towns, then smaller and more remote towns and villages, until by the 1820s it would have been unusual to find a Scottish town without a bookseller.⁸¹ Indeed in 1819 the Poet Laureate Robert Southey commented that bookshops ‘seem to be much more numerous in Scotch than in English towns’.⁸² Despite this spread it is noticeable that when provincial booksellers marketed their services in newspaper advertisements they almost always stressed how they could obtain the latest books published in Edinburgh and London, thus

⁷⁵ For information about early Scottish newspapers see A. Mackenzie, *NEWSPLAN: report of the NEWSPLAN project in Scotland, September 1994* (London, 1994).

⁷⁶ Some of these early provincial newspapers were short-lived however, including the *Dundee Weekly Magazine* (1775–1780).

⁷⁷ In 1800 13 Scottish newspapers were being printed in 6 different places; by 1810 the equivalent figures were 25 and 12.

⁷⁸ The development of Scottish newspapers has been little commented on by historians but can be appreciated by reading the early issues and observing the gradual changes.

⁷⁹ This mix is revealed by the variety of news and advertisements in each issue, for example reports about events in town alongside agricultural news and advertisements.

⁸⁰ This early stage in the spread of booksellers is revealed by studying the locations of booksellers recorded in the NLS’s online *Scottish Book Trade Index*.

⁸¹ Evidence for this change by the end of the period is provided by contemporary directories such as Pigot’s 1825–6 covering the whole of Scotland.

⁸² R. Southey, *Journal of a tour in Scotland in 1819* (London, 1929), pp. 59–60.

providing a similar service to major city booksellers.⁸³ Such local ordering facilities reduced the need for customers physically to travel to city centre bookshops or by ordering by post.

While bookshops became an increasingly essential requirement of Scottish towns, the spread of libraries was comparatively slower, although by the 1820s few towns would lack such a facility. Proprietary subscription libraries for example, usually set up by groups of gentry and local professionals, were typically started in the provinces in the closing decades of the 18th century, providing a mix of improving literature and sometimes fiction. Although the reasons behind these libraries' foundation are rarely explicitly recorded in their records, these libraries seem by and large to have reflected an interest in Enlightenment thinking and provided venues for like-minded individuals to access books of interest to them, particularly those that would stretch their minds.⁸⁴ By 1800, there were over 40 such libraries providing local lending throughout Scotland, albeit generally to a restricted group of readers.⁸⁵ Public town libraries catering for everyone were much rarer, though a few examples existed, including Haddington's Gray Library (1729).⁸⁶ A more significant form of accessible Scottish library was the circulating library, found particularly near the eastern Scottish coast early on in their development. Edinburgh had circulating libraries from at least the 1720s, Perth the 1750s and Aberdeen and Dalkeith the 1760s.⁸⁷ Glasgow only had circulating libraries from the 1770s, the same decade as much smaller Banff. Over subsequent decades the number of circulating libraries grew until the 1820s

⁸³ The role of a provincial bookseller in 18th century England is described in Feather, *The Provincial Book Trade in Eighteenth-Century England*, pp. 69–97 (Chapter 5, 'The Bookselling Business'). It is likely that a Scottish provincial bookseller from the same period would have followed a similar pattern.

⁸⁴ See Chapter 4 for a more detailed discussion of the stock and borrowings of subscription libraries.

⁸⁵ Crawford documented the chronological growth of these institutions. See Crawford, 'The origins and development of societal library activity in Scotland', pp. 132–136. Crawford highlights the importance of the 1790s for their foundation: of the 43 proprietary subscription libraries founded by 1800 25 were founded in the 1790s, including 11 in just one year, 1797.

⁸⁶ Such public town libraries include a mix of endowed institutions such as Haddington's Gray Library (set up by a local minister) and subscription libraries (set up by local groups but encouraged by the town councils such as Montrose).

⁸⁷ These dates are based on entries in the Scottish Book Trade Index, www.nls.uk/catalogues/resources/sbti/.

when Pigot's 1825–6 country-wide directory records 55 circulating libraries in 30 Scottish towns, including Glasgow's 8 circulating libraries now outnumbering Edinburgh's 6.⁸⁸ The growth of circulating libraries seems to have happened later in Scotland than in England, possibly a result of lower population figures in towns driving the specialisation of services at a different rate. Within Scotland, the early east-coast difference is more difficult to explain, though again population differences may have been a factor. The early difference diminished by the 1820s as west-coast towns grew in population, as did the range of services they provided. A major advantage of circulating libraries was their relatively low cost, their range of stock and their new books—particularly novels with which they became particularly associated.⁸⁹ Such factors attracted readers from not just within the town but also from a rural hinterland, as one enthusiastic reader from Renfrewshire in the early 19th century recalled:

I early imbibed a taste for reading, and the first trifling sum that lay in my hands ... was laid out as subscription money at a circulating library in a neighbouring town. After the trials of the day were past, the little I could snatch from sleep was devoted to the perusal of such books as the library could supply. Often have I trudged, in the dark winter nights, a distance of several miles, through wind and rain, to get my books exchanged. I read much of History, Biography, Voyages, Travels, almost all the old Dramatic Poets, of whom I was passionately fond, and the majority of the English Classics. In this way I laid in a considerable stock of miscellaneous knowledge while yet very young⁹⁰

⁸⁸ As one of the first national directories Pigot's 1825-6 directory gives the first reliable countrywide impression of the spread and availability of these reading institutions.

⁸⁹ For example the cost of using William Gray's Edinburgh circulating library in 1772 was 3s. per quarter, 1s. 6d. per month, or 1d. per night—Kaufman, *Libraries and Their Users*, p. 137. E. Jacobs, 'Eighteenth-century British circulating libraries and cultural book history', *Book History*, vol. 6 (2003), p. 19 reviewed circulating library catalogues and found that fiction accounted for 20% of stock of larger ones (average holdings of about 5000 titles) and 70% of stock of smaller ones (average holdings of 430 titles).

⁹⁰ C. Campbell, *Memoirs of Charles Campbell, at present prisoner in the jail of Glasgow, including his adventures as a Seaman etc.* (Glasgow, 1828), p. 3. According to the

Other urban venues that encouraged reading, through periodicals rather than books, were reading rooms and coffee houses, which typically stocked the latest newspapers and magazines from Edinburgh and London.⁹¹ Coffee houses in 18th century London were traditionally places not just for drinking or reading but where important business deals were struck and networking took place.⁹² Coffee houses in Scotland seem, like circulating libraries, to have been comparatively fewer in number than in England, and those known tended invariably to focus in towns, particularly on the east coast.⁹³

Looking at the different types of reading venues, bookshops and libraries—particularly circulating libraries—spread most effectively through the growing urban hierarchy. This combination of town and print culture is highlighted by Borsay as a key element in an English ‘urban renaissance’ of the 18th century, but this aspect has been little explored by urban historians in Scotland to date.⁹⁴ Scottish libraries tended to start later than their English equivalents, again perhaps due to population differences. Bookshops possibly started later too, although by 1819 they were found in most Scottish towns and villages. The change over time was more dramatic in Scotland, compressed into a smaller period, implying both a rapid growth in demand for reading material, and the new accessibility further fuelling people’s appetite for reading. Indeed, in the early 1820s a visitor commented that reading in Scotland had become a ‘necessity’, and far more popular than in England.⁹⁵ Reasons for this difference are elusive. Indeed an ongoing historical debate hangs over how closely Scottish urban culture in this era mirrored its English

autobiography Campbell was born the son of a cotton mill warehouseman in 1793 in Tarbert, Argyllshire but lived from infancy in Johnstone, Renfrewshire.

⁹¹ Reading rooms and coffee houses often advertised their facilities in local newspapers, revealing the range of reading material available.

⁹² M. Ellis, *The coffee house: a cultural history* (London, 2005).

⁹³ The earliest known Scottish coffee houses were founded in Edinburgh and Glasgow in 1673—see C. Jackson, *Restoration Scotland, 1660–1690: royalist politics, religion and ideas* (Woodbridge, 2003), p. 41. However dates of later ones are uncertain and remain to be uncovered, where possible, in records in local archives and newspapers.

⁹⁴ P. Borsay, *The English urban renaissance: culture and society in the provincial town 1660–1770* (Oxford, 1989).

⁹⁵ M.K. McLeod (ed), *From Charlotte Square to Fingal’s Cave: Reminiscences of a Journey through Scotland, 1820–1824*, by Krystyn Lach-Szyrma (East Linton, 2004), p. 222.

counterpart.⁹⁶ Nonetheless the Scottish print trade was tightly integrated to that of England, with much toing-and-froing of books and other print material, and transmission of ideas, such as the new circulating libraries, between the two countries.

The study of individual towns demonstrates the growth in reading opportunities. Although the county town of Cupar, in Fife, did not have a bookshop until the 1790s, readers could travel to nearby St Andrews or Dundee. By the first decade of the 1800s, books were being printed in Cupar, and the earliest trade directories in the 1820s reveal two bookshops along with a public library. Manufacturing towns also evinced dramatic growth in reading opportunities: Hawick, in Roxburghshire, had five booksellers by the 1820s, including one running a circulating library, two public libraries, two public reading rooms, and a mechanics' institution.⁹⁷

Not all libraries were based in towns. In 1817 Samuel Brown founded his Itinerating Libraries in East Lothian, setting up small portable libraries which moved from town to town, village to village, providing low-cost borrowing to local residents, particularly in rural areas.⁹⁸ Even this innovation, which inspired similar portable library movements around the world, did not reach all potential readers, as one young East Lothian rural reader recalled, rueing the Itinerating Library not coming near enough so he had to find other ways of accessing books.⁹⁹

Who different reading opportunities were catering for

Knowing that opportunities for reading in Scotland existed is only part of the picture. Another key factor to consider is who such opportunities were targeted at. The easiest to analyse are the libraries, particularly since a large number of them were set up for use by

⁹⁶ R. Harris, 'Towns, improvement and cultural change in Georgian Scotland: the evidence of the Angus burghs, c.1760–1820', *Urban History*, Vol. 33 (2006), pp. 195–212.

⁹⁷ This detailed information for the 1820s comes from Pigot's 1825-6 trade directory.

⁹⁸ A. Tyrrell, 'Illuminating the World: Samuel Brown and Itinerating Libraries', *Scottish Local History*, issue 64 (Summer 2005), pp. 35–46.

⁹⁹ A. Somerville, *The Autobiography of a Working Man* (London, 1848), p. 60.

restricted groups of individuals, particularly of the middling sort. These were the subscription libraries, both private and public, the former closer to book clubs and reading groups, the latter closer to lending libraries as today, albeit on a smaller scale. Catalogues of subscription libraries often list their members, such as Hawick Subscription Library.

**Table 2: Occupational structure of
Hawick Subscription Library subscribers circa 1810**

gentry	18 (43.9%)
professionals	11 (26.8%)
farming/agriculture	8 (19.5%)
artisans/tradesmen	3 (7.3%)
merchants	1 (2.4%)
Total	41

Source: Derived from *List of Present Proprietors of Hawick Library and Catalogue* (Hawick, ca1810).

Professionals at Hawick included ministers and surgeons; while the artisans and tradesmen included a brewer and a tanner. A large number of the library's subscribers were tenant farmers, an important group in the surrounding rural area, illustrating how much such libraries could attract people outside the town in which they were based.¹⁰⁰

**Table 3: Occupational structure of
Arbroath Subscription Library subscribers in 1804**

gentry	20 (29.0%)
merchants	17 (24.6%)
professionals	13 (18.8%)
farming/agriculture	13 (18.8%)
ship owners	4 (5.8%)
artisans/tradesmen	2 (2.9%)
Total	69

Source: Derived from Angus Archives, MS451/1, Arbroath Subscription Library Minute Book 1797–1832, 1804 December 31.

Arbroath Subscription Library also had many farmers among its subscribers, but here there were even more merchants, and also some ship owners, reflecting the different

¹⁰⁰ Occupations are not recorded directly for these men but the addresses given for them look mainly like farms and it is likely that most if not all were the tenants.

occupational structure of a trading port. Other Arbroath subscribers included a barber and a tanner. Both libraries had a similar proportion of subscribers who were tradesmen, farmers or maritime workers: 24% at Hawick, and 26% at Arbroath, i.e. a substantial minority in each case. Overall, though, gentry were the largest single group using both of these libraries, which along with large numbers of professional members—particularly ministers—was typical for such institutions. However such libraries catered for only a tiny proportion of the local population: the number of subscribers at the Hawick and Arbroath subscription libraries was only approximately 1% of each town's population, and some of those subscribers lived in the surrounding countryside, meaning that the effective subscriber proportion of the town population would be even smaller still.¹⁰¹

Some subscription libraries opened their collections to a wider range of readers, even subsidising their poorer members in some cases, for example Dundee Public Subscription Library in 1796.¹⁰² Generally though, the subscription library movement in Scotland was dominated by gentry and the middling sort, such as professionals.

At the same time, although often harder to detect, comparable moves were being taken by the working class to increase their reading opportunities. Examples include small-scale newspaper clubs, where groups of men would come together regularly to read the latest newspapers, sharing the cost, and keeping up to date with events. Such newspaper clubs are occasionally depicted in fiction such as Galt's *Annals of the Parish* where the cotton-spinners and muslin weavers in 1788 clubbed together to buy a London newspaper and

¹⁰¹ Populations for each town at the relevant time can only be estimated from head counts in the *Old Statistical Account* and *New Statistical Account*. Arbroath town's population in 1792, including the portion of the town in St Vigeans parish, was approximately 5000 (OSA, vol. 7, p. 347). Later estimates suggest that the population figure in 1804 would have been similar to this. Hawick town's population was probably about 3500 in 1810, based on figures for the urban portion of Hawick parish in 1791 and 1811 (NSA, vol. 3, p. 396), and estimating the urban portion of neighbouring Wilton parish in 1811 (NSA, vol. 3, p. 77) which should be added on top.

¹⁰² Dundee Central Library, Lamb Collection, box 316(6), Dundee Public (Subscription) Library minutes, 1796 October 1.

were ‘nightly in the habit of meeting and debating about the affairs of the French’.¹⁰³

Contemporary memoirs of the time also recall the practice:

At the time of newspaper clubs, and during the great continental wars and naval actions in which the public took much interest, his [Simon Sawers’] back shop was a well-known place where old Haddington worthies met of an evening, and one of the company read the *Courant*, or *Edinburgh Weekly Journal*, or Donaldson’s *Edinburgh Advertiser*, for the edification of the rest. John Jameson, a well-known excise officer, was often the reader. It is recorded of him, that on one occasion, as he was reading an account of a battle between the Turks and Russians, and called them “The Trunks and the Ruffians,” Simon checked him as reading wrong.¹⁰⁴

More formally, a number of working-class libraries were established during this period. The best-known are Leadhills (1741) and Westerkirk (1756) in south-west Scotland, both of them miners’ libraries.¹⁰⁵ However Crawford observes that at least 51 societal libraries catering for a predominantly working-class membership had been established in Scotland before 1822, all run by tradesmen, artisans or other working-class men, and separate from the 43 proprietorial subscription libraries catering for the middling sort.¹⁰⁶ Far more elusive were a similar number of working-class reading societies. These informal institutions were unlikely to be recorded in local directories or newspapers but a series of letters in the *Scots Chronicle* reveals the existence of approximately 50 of them, mostly on the west coast, and at least some of them founded because of the absence of nearby

¹⁰³ J. Galt, *Annals of the Parish* (Edinburgh, 1994), p. 118.

¹⁰⁴ J. Martine, *Reminiscences of the royal burgh of Haddington and old East Lothian agriculturists* (Edinburgh and Glasgow, 1883), p. 24.

¹⁰⁵ Kaufman, ‘The Rise of Community Libraries in Scotland’, pp. 258–259.

¹⁰⁶ Crawford, ‘The origins and development of societal library activity in Scotland’, particularly pp. 209–213.

circulating libraries.¹⁰⁷ Such groups were set up by like-minded working-class men, sometimes with radical political beliefs, and tended to operate on similar terms:

I have heard of eleven or twelve such Societies in Paisley, containing each, upon an average, between 30 and 40 members. Each Society meets once a month, in a room where their library is kept, and at their meetings every member contributes Sixpence, or in some Societies Ninepence, which is immediately applied to the purchase of such books as a majority of the members prefer. Every one then receives one or more books, as the Library will allow, which he returns at next meeting; so that no book can be long in the hands of one, till it has circulated through all the members.¹⁰⁸

Such working-class initiatives were particularly important because earlier steps to encourage library access throughout Scottish society had failed. A notable example of this was Rev. James Kirkwood's 1699 plan for parochial libraries: libraries based on the books of each parish minister and available freely to the local parishioners of all classes.¹⁰⁹ Although Kirkwood is sometimes acclaimed as the father of free libraries in Scotland, his scheme soon foundered, and it was not until the mid 19th century that free libraries spread widely throughout the country.¹¹⁰

Some libraries may have been restricted in access but buying reading material was generally open to a wider variety of people since print material ranged from cheap

¹⁰⁷ *Scots Chronicle*, 1796 October 20, 1796 December 30, 1797 January 20, 1797 February 10, 1797 February 24, 1797 April 4, 1797 May 19, 1797 May 30, 1797 July 7, 1797 November 10, 1797 December 5, 1798 February 16, and 1798 March 16.

¹⁰⁸ *Scots Chronicle*, 1797 May 19.

¹⁰⁹ M.C.T. Simpson, 'Kirkwood, James (b. c.1650, d. in or after 1709)', in H.C.G. Matthew and B. Harrison (eds.), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/15682> (accessed October 28, 2007).

¹¹⁰ Free public libraries in Scotland were encouraged by a combination of the 1853 Public Library Act (Scotland), allowing local taxation to fund them, and Andrew Carnegie donating to local authorities the money needed for new library buildings.

broadsides through to high-quality books, although the former are harder to trace.¹¹¹ An indication of the market provincial booksellers were targeting can be gained from the variety of books found in Ebenezer Wilson's 1788 Dumfries bookshop, discussed more fully in Chapter 4, but introduced here briefly.¹¹² Low-cost pamphlets, schoolbooks and cheap editions were on sale alongside the finest quality texts aimed at local collectors of fine books.¹¹³ It was always easier for wealthier people to buy books, and likely that earlier in the period, many would buy directly from Edinburgh, either in person or by mail-order.¹¹⁴ However, the growing number of provincial venues catered for an increasing range of customers. Moreover lower-cost sellers of books—general merchants and chapmen—carried books further into rural Scotland. For example, at the same time as Ebenezer Wilson was selling a large range of books in Dumfries, local inventories reveal that a number of other retailers were selling books. For example James McTurk chapman in Chanlockfoot (d. 1780) owned a mix of catechisms, poems, a French spelling book, and four Bibles, all almost certainly goods intended for sale.¹¹⁵ Similarly Robert Johnston chapman in Dumfries (d. 1781) stocked a number of Bibles, other religious books, the Trades Guide, and a variety of clothing and hats.¹¹⁶ Among general merchants William Paxton merchant in Lockerbie (d. 1756) had 'Eight Proverbs, two Testaments, a Psalm book & sixteen Catechisms'.¹¹⁷ Similarly John Brown merchant in Thornhill (d. 1784) had:

¹¹¹ Despite their relative scarcity broadsides have attracted the attention of a number of historians. See for example L. Shepard, *The history of street literature: the story of broadside ballads, chapbooks, proclamations, news-sheets, election bills, tracts, pamphlets, cocks, catchpennies, and other ephemera* (Newton Abbot, 1973).

¹¹² NAS, CC5/6/17, 1790 February 16. The Scottish Book Trade Index (<http://www.nls.uk/catalogues/resources/sbti/>) indicates that Wilson was trading as a bookseller in Dumfries from 1756 onwards so was a long-established local bookseller.

¹¹³ Two-thirds of the items were valued at a shilling or less and a fifth at threepence or under. At the other extreme 10 items were priced at 8 shillings or more, all multi-volume items presumably targeted at the wealthier customers.

¹¹⁴ Feather, *The Provincial Book Trade in Eighteenth-century England*, pp. 53–68 describes some of the processes involved when provincial booksellers ordered books for their customers from central suppliers.

¹¹⁵ NAS, CC5/6/16, 1780 September 19.

¹¹⁶ NAS, CC5/6/16, 1781 October 2.

¹¹⁷ NAS, CC5/6/14, 1758 February 4.

Item three Common Bibles worth Four shillings & nine pence. Item three small gilt Bibles worth seven shillings. Item a pair gilt Bibles worth Four shillings. Item a New Testament & Willis's Directory worth One shilling & two pence. Item a Bible with Margins worth Three shillings.¹¹⁸

From this evidence, religion predominated in the publications stocked by local chapmen and general merchants, quite in contrast to bookseller Wilson's more diverse and larger stock list.¹¹⁹ It is likely that a similar largely invisible army of 'booksellers', particularly those selling cheap print, existed across the country throughout the period. It is extremely difficult to trace cheap print in Scotland and its ownership. Occasionally, some will be mentioned in evidence from individual readers, but generally it is overlooked in surviving evidence of ownership. Transient cheap print was less likely to be recorded than valuable books such as bibles.¹²⁰ Roy analysed the growth of chapbooks in Scotland from the mid 18th century onwards, suggesting that 'a conservative estimate of their sale during this period runs to over 200,000 per year' with their contents a mix of reprints of history, poetry, and general reading matter.¹²¹ As with other forms of print, imports from England could have been significant. Newcastle was a particularly important centre for chapbook printing, often those with a Scottish flavour.¹²² Assessing the scale of cheap print across Scotland during this period is difficult, largely because most has been lost. The Scottish Chapbook Catalogue at Glasgow University indexes that university's collection of chapbooks, but since many of its chapbooks have no clear date of printing, it is not possible to restrict the search to a specific time period.¹²³ Places of printing can be searched for 1618 items in the collection and this shows a bias towards chapbooks printed in and around Glasgow: 46% from Glasgow, 20% from Edinburgh, 12% from Stirling,

¹¹⁸ NAS, CC5/6/16, 1784 March 15.

¹¹⁹ Ebenezer Wilson's book stock is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

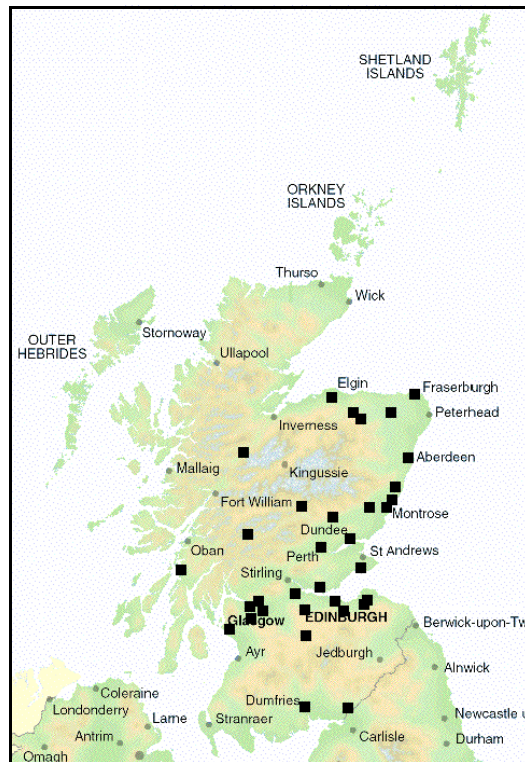
¹²⁰ A rare study of a reader and his cheap print is J.C. Corson, 'Scott's boyhood collection of chapbooks', *The Bibliothek*, Vol. 2–3 (1959–1962), pp. 202–218. de Kruif, 'Classes of readers', pp. 430–431 discusses the transient nature of cheap print in general.

¹²¹ G.R. Roy, 'Some Notes on Scottish Chapbooks', *Scottish Literary Journal*, Vol. 1 (1974), pp. 50, 56–59.

¹²² Feather, *The Provincial Book Trade in Eighteenth-century England*, p. 107.

¹²³ <http://special.lib.gla.ac.uk/chapbooks/search/>

11% from Falkirk, and 4.5% from Paisley. Such a spread is unsurprising given the location of the collection but will not reflect wider Scottish trends. Chapbooks were typically sold by chapmen, itinerant pedlars described by Spufford.¹²⁴ Some chapmen can be found in records of wills and inventories, although almost certainly only a minority of those active at the time.¹²⁵ Between 1750 and 1820 there are 52 Scottish chapmen with surviving wills or inventories, between them covering most of Scotland, even parts of the Highlands poorly covered by conventional booksellers.¹²⁶



**Figure 1: Chapmen in Scotland between 1750 and 1820
with surviving wills or inventories**

Source: Online indexes originally at ScottishDocuments.com, later at ScotlandsPeople.gov.uk.

¹²⁴ M. Spufford, *The Great Reclotting of Rural England* (London, 1984), pp. 45–46. Spufford focussed on 17th century England but also cited examples from the 18th century and Scotland.

¹²⁵ Wills and inventories tend to record the richer people with greater consistency, so small-scale dealers such as chapmen are less likely to be recorded in these documents.

¹²⁶ In compiling these figures duplicate references to the same chapmen have been ignored, together with Scottish chapmen active in England but with wills or inventories recorded in Scotland. Examples of the latter include James Cunninghame, ‘chapman, of Blechinglee, Surey’ (1743); Patrick Stewart, ‘sometime travelling chapman and trader in England, died at Collintowie, parish of Kilmadock’ (1759); William Crichton, ‘residenter in Sanquhar, formerly travelling chapman in the county of Hertford’ (1783); John Henderson, ‘in Glasgow, travelling chapman in England’ (1785); and Peter Hill, ‘travelling merchant or chapman from Scotland, resident in or near Worcester’ (1790).

A known customer of chapmen was Hugh Miller. When he started work as a stonemason in the 1820s Miller found that buying books was still largely beyond his means, apart from those that could be bought cheaply from a travelling pedlar:

He [the pedlar] had a turn for buying and reading curious books, which, after mastering their contents, he always sold again; and he learned to bring them, when of a kind which no one else would purchase, to my mother, and recommend them as suitable for me. Poor Jack was always conscientious in his recommendations. I know not how he contrived to take the exact measure of my tastes in the matter, but suitable for me they invariably were, and as his price rarely exceeded a shilling per volume, and sometimes fell below a sixpence, my mother always purchased, when she could, upon his judgement.¹²⁷

Although chapmen helped to open up the markets for books in rural and far-flung parts of Scotland, reading material was still predominantly available closer to the towns, particularly at the start of the period when only the largest cities and towns had bookshops and libraries. Over subsequent decades the number of towns with such facilities increased as the Scottish population increasingly moved from country to town. Such an urban bias is understandable for purely commercial reasons: it made sense for booksellers to establish their new businesses in places where they would attract the largest numbers of customers. Nevertheless it meant that people living in towns, or near enough to be able to access them, had an unarguable advantage when it came to accessing reading material. Such an urban advantage was most acutely seen at the start of the period in Edinburgh, with its early concentration of circulating libraries and booksellers in far greater quantities than its population alone merited. One explanation for this dominance is the early growth of the print trade in Edinburgh. Another is the importance of the city in Scottish cultural life with many of the elite gravitating towards the Scottish capital for pleasure or business. The

¹²⁷ J. Robertson (ed.), *Hugh Miller: My Schools and Schoolmasters, Or The Story of my Education* (Edinburgh, 1993), pp. 230–231.

dominance of Edinburgh in the book trade declined until by the 1820s there were comparatively fewer booksellers and circulating libraries there, and a greater provision of such facilities in smaller towns around Scotland. Yet even at the end of the period, provincial booksellers likened their facilities to those of traders in the capital: Edinburgh's bookselling trade may have lost its dominance in sheer numbers, but it still retained its cachet.

Importance of informal lending between friends and neighbours

So far this chapter has focused on formal opportunities for reading, in libraries and bookshops in towns. However, another key component of accessibility was the informal lending of reading material between friends and neighbours. This was the case with Hugh Miller, who supplemented the books left by his father by borrowing books from a former clerk in nearby Cromarty, thus working through 'a tolerably complete collection of the British essayists ... several interesting works of travels and voyages ... [and] a good many of the minor poets too'.¹²⁸

Significantly, the importance of such informal lending emerges from contemporary accounts at all levels of society. For example, in the late 1740s the Countess of Traquair in southern Scotland was borrowing her newspapers.¹²⁹ She had arranged to borrow them from a neighbour, Archibald Hope, who had bought them for the benefit of his household and visitors. The Countess could read the newspapers, so long as she sent for them in the morning and returned them before dinner. Hope complained because she returned the newspapers late and in poor condition, leading to the arrangement breaking down. Normally someone in the Countess's position would be assumed to have been more likely

¹²⁸ Robertson, *Hugh Miller*, pp. 52–53.

¹²⁹ These newspapers were probably being read after her husband died in 1741 and before she left Traquair in 1749 when her son came home with his new bride.

to buy and lend newspapers than to borrow them from someone else, but this was not the case here, possibly due to her reduced financial circumstances.¹³⁰

Book lending among the landed classes can be examined through the early 19th century letters of the Wedderburn of Pearsie family, which reveal extensive lending. Charles Wedderburn of Pearsie lent numerous books to George Dempster of Dunnichen, who in turn lent some of them to other local friends and associates:

Your Book is such a treat I have put it into the hands of Two neighbouring
Readers ... & hope to return it soon¹³¹

Here book borrowing was a two-way process, with Wedderburn borrowing a book from Dempster which was to go on a longer tour among a group of reading friends:

At length the Spirit of the Book has returned to me from St Andrews last night and I lose no Time in dispatching it for Pearsy. After it has made the Tour of both sides of Esk & Rosen I'll thank you to return it to me that I may dispatch it on a longer Journey to see some friends in Perthshire to whom it is promised.¹³²

A notable case of underestimating the extent of such private book lending by a past historian emerges from the diary of Rev. Mr George Ridpath (1716–1772) minister of

¹³⁰ The fortunes of the Jacobite Traquair family had tumbled after 1745.

¹³¹ Dundee City Archives, Wedderburn of Pearsie family papers, Box 6 bundle 15, George Dempster of Dunnichen to Charles Wedderburn of Pearsie, 1806 July 13. These are not the only instances of book lending recorded by Wedderburn family members. From an earlier period numerous other ones were recorded in A.H. Miller (ed.), *The Compt Buik of David Wedderburne merchant of Dundee 1587–1630 together with the shipping lists of Dundee 1580–1618* (Edinburgh, 1898). See also C. McKean, 'What kind of Renaissance Town was Dundee?', in C. McKean, R. Harris, and C.A. Whatley (eds.), *Dundee Renaissance to Enlightenment* (Dundee, 2009), p. 22.

¹³² Dundee City Archives, Wedderburn of Pearsie family papers, Box 9 bundle 12, George Dempster of Dunnichen to Charles Wedderburn of Pearsie, 1812 October 21.

Stitchel parish near Kelso in Roxburghshire.¹³³ In 1960 Kaufman published a paper which focussed on the importance to Ridpath of the nearby Kelso Library founded in 1751, one of the earliest subscription libraries of its kind in Britain.¹³⁴ Kaufman argued that Ridpath's reading material 'with few exceptions' was obtained from the library in Kelso. Borrowing books was particularly important for Ridpath, because he hardly ever bought them, stating in the diary on several occasions that he could not afford to do so—although there were several titles he would dearly like to buy if he could.¹³⁵ Ministers like Ridpath were typical subscribers to libraries like Kelso, and Ridpath was an active member of the library's management committee, regularly attending meetings to decide how the library was run, drawing up lists of new books to be ordered, and even personally compiling a new printed catalogue of the books in 1760 (no copies of this survive).¹³⁶ However, re-analysing Ridpath's diary suggests a different borrowing picture of where he obtained his reading material from. Whilst it is true that the library was a major source for him, which he probably visited it at least once a week, Ridpath typically read newspapers and magazines elsewhere, and the number of books borrowed from the library appears to have been almost matched by the number borrowed from other people: out of 317 diary references to reading books, the sources of 116 are indicated; only 45 definitely came from the library, and nearly as many again, 41, were borrowed from other people.¹³⁷

The individuals who lent books to Ridpath fall into several categories, some overlapping and probably most easily considered through a series of expanding networks, starting with Ridpath's immediate family. His two brothers (both trainee ministers) regularly sent over

¹³³ The analysis here is based on the transcribed version of Ridpath's diary—J.B. Paul (ed.), *Diary of George Ridpath Minister of Stitchel 1755–1761* (Edinburgh, 1922) (abbreviated to *DGR* in subsequent footnotes). The diary's original manuscript volumes are in the National Archives of Scotland, CH1/5/122 (1755–1758) and CH1/5/123 (1758–1761). For more information on Ridpath see A.M.C. Mitchell, 'Ridpath, George (1716?–1772)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/23636>].

¹³⁴ P. Kaufman, 'Library News from Kelso', *Library Review*, Vol. 7 (1960), pp. 486–489.

¹³⁵ *DGR*, 1761 January 29, p. 368.

¹³⁶ *DGR*, 1759 December 19, p. 292.

¹³⁷ Of the other 21 items some were books consulted in private houses. Others have less clear origins, with Ridpath typically noting who brought the item to him, but not if it came from the library in Kelso, or if it was borrowed from another individual (or a mix of the two, with Ridpath taking a book directly from another library borrower).

bundles of books, magazines and newspapers for him, some of them delivered in person, others sent by local carriers.¹³⁸ Outside his family, the most frequent private source of books for Ridpath was his near neighbour, Sir Robert Pringle baronet of Stichel. Ridpath often brought home books after visiting Sir Robert, or his sister Nancy brought them over for him.¹³⁹ He frequently read at Sir Robert's, for example poring over the latest newspapers or books while a dinner guest there on Sunday night. Sir Robert's brother Dr John Pringle in London (Physician to the Duke of Cumberland and later founder of army medicine) was also a good friend and regularly sent up publications from London (including Royal Society papers) to his brother, to be passed on to Ridpath.¹⁴⁰ As well as gentry, Ridpath tapped into a network of local professionals, particularly at Kelso, and he borrowed books from the schoolmaster Mr Dobby and medical men Gibson, Davidson and Miller.

However the most significant group of private lenders, certainly the largest in number, were Ridpath's fellow ministers in Roxburghshire and Berwickshire, especially his good friend Rev. Mr Matthew Dysart of Eccles parish who lent him nearly as many books as Sir Robert Pringle. Dysart appears to have owned a particularly fine collection of books, both classic volumes and more recently published works, and it was at his manse in 1760 that Ridpath first saw Macpherson's *Fragments of Highland Poetry* which he later borrowed to read from Sir Robert Pringle.¹⁴¹ The network of ministers was also important for Ridpath's reading because their regular meetings, both for work matters and more informally, typically included discussion about what they had been reading. For example in 1755 at a meeting of ministers at Greenlaw manse the 'principle subject of discourse' was David Hume's *History* 'which John Hume has been reading'.¹⁴² Similarly in 1757,

¹³⁸ *DGR*, 1759 November 9, p. 283; and 1760 August 2, p. 330..

¹³⁹ For example *DGR*, 1755 December 17, p. 47; 1759 March 24, p. 239; and 1761 March 25, p. 375.

¹⁴⁰ *DGR*, 1760 March 3, p. 303; and 1760 May 27, p. 319.

¹⁴¹ *DGR*, 1760 June 25, p. 324; and 1760 September 10, p. 337.

¹⁴² *DGR*, 1755 May 8, p. 8. John Hume, minister of Greenlaw, was a particular friend of Ridpath and they often discussed reading with each other. Hume's inventory survives and lists many personal possessions (clothing, furniture, etc.) in detail (in a roup roll) although books are only referred to briefly: 'The Defuncts Library of Books per Catalogue were

when Ridpath was a dinner guest of the minister at Sprouston he noted in his diary that ‘we had much disputation with Mr Lunday [Kelso] about Douglas, David Hume, etc.’¹⁴³

Such informal lending between friends has been under-documented in Scotland, albeit occasionally commented on in other countries.¹⁴⁴ For more privileged circles of readers, such as Ridpath and his friends, it would increase the diversity of their reading material and the speed with which some of these readers could access new works. For less fortunate readers such as Miller, it would open up valuable reading opportunities that would otherwise have been probably beyond their grasp.

Conclusions

This chapter has demonstrated significant growth in the opportunities for reading, particularly near towns. Libraries and bookshops spread throughout provincial urban Scotland until by the 1820s few towns lacked them. That there was such a rapid growth suggests a growing appreciation of the importance of print and reading among the population in general. Commercial viability was always the key factor, prompting the location of bookshops and circulating libraries in higher-population centres, and important locations such as market towns.¹⁴⁵ Nevertheless the demand for reading facilities among the public seems to have been great enough that by the end of the period even the smallest towns and villages supported reading.

The importance of towns to changing reading opportunities is unarguable, but the interaction of social class is more complex. Obviously someone with more money would always be better placed to buy reading material. In addition a number of institutions

sold to Mr Elliot Bookseller in Kelso for eleven pounds seven shillings sterling’ (NAS, Lauder Commissary Court, CC15/5/11, 1778 August 4, p502).

¹⁴³ *DGR*, 1757 April 13, p. 130.

¹⁴⁴ For example R. Gillespie, *Reading Ireland: Print, reading and social change in early modern Ireland* (Manchester, 2005), p. 67.

¹⁴⁵ Even then there is evidence of the sometimes fragile nature of the book trade with a high number of booksellers among the CS96 sequestrated estates papers in the NAS.

restricted their readership, particularly some of the private subscription libraries whose members were almost exclusively drawn from the middling sort. Nevertheless there is evidence—albeit often harder to trace and probably underestimating the extent of the movement—of working-class readers actively seeking access to reading material at low cost, as in the numerous working-class libraries, the newspaper clubs and reading groups described in the *Scots Chronicle* correspondence, and indeed through the informal lending of books among individuals. This pattern is also seen in other classes of society and little commented on by scholars. Such evidence suggests a considerable appetite for reading, and appears to be symptomatic of a wider trend throughout society.

Commercial viability was not the only factor behind the growth of reading opportunities. A number of more subtle reasons can be detected, although this can be harder to do, especially if such reasons were not explicitly recorded in relevant records. Generally such reasons revolve around groups of people creating new reading opportunities for themselves. Probably one of the most widespread influences was Enlightenment thinking, reflected most notably in the formation of numerous proprietary subscription libraries in the closing decades of the 18th century. However other influences can be detected: people deliberately setting out to follow newspaper reports during the turmoil of the Napoleonic wars, or working-class reading groups probably impelled by radical tendencies. Although commercial reasons lay behind most bookshops, it is likely there was a complex relationship between demand and supply, and booksellers were responding to a growing customer demand prompted with more opaque reasons.

Overall the surviving evidence suggests that most readers in Scotland who wanted to pursue an interest in reading would have been able to by the end of the period studied in this thesis. Wealth and status would always provide more options, but neither was a requirement for people to pursue their reading habits, and there is considerable evidence of people from all social classes doing so, particularly later in the period as availability of bookshops and libraries, and other reading opportunities, spread throughout the country.

Chapter 3: Reading in the context of daily life

This chapter looks at how reading fitted into the lives of Scots in this period, to consider who would have had time for reading, and contemporary attitudes to the activity. This aspect of reading has been little studied by past historians in Scotland, not just book historians such as Crawford and Houston but also social historians interested in attitudes to recreation, time and privacy.¹⁴⁶ Indeed the debate by the latter group seems little advanced beyond that outlined by Graham in his account of Scottish social life in the 18th century written over a century ago.¹⁴⁷ For book historians, the shortfall of research is particularly surprising because ample source material survives in the form of contemporary accounts such as letters, diaries and memoirs: the type of records well utilised by historians of reading in other countries.¹⁴⁸ However they tend to be scattered throughout archives in Scotland and further afield, and even once located can be arduous to search, particularly private family and estate papers.¹⁴⁹ In addition, references to reading tend to be rare, compounding the time taken to find useful results. There are naturally more surviving letters, diaries and memoirs for the middling and upper sectors of society than for the rest, influencing the extent to which such records can represent society as a whole.¹⁵⁰ Working-class Scottish accounts, including ones mentioning reading, do survive, and the effort to search such records is repaid when useful references are traced and collated so that a

¹⁴⁶ Crawford remarks in passing that a working-class reader would have needed ‘adequate leisure’ to read, but this is the closest he gets to considering the issue—Crawford, ‘Reading and book use in 18th-century Scotland’, p. 40.

¹⁴⁷ H.G. Graham, *The social life of Scotland in the eighteenth century* (London, 1899).

¹⁴⁸ Research using such sources elsewhere includes both studies of individual readers and broader surveys of many readers. As an example of the former type of research Sharpe studied the reading notebooks of 17th-century reader Sir William Drake—K. Sharpe, *Reading Revolutions: The Politics of Reading in Early Modern England* (New Haven and London, 2000). In a broader survey, again from England, Tadmor explored women’s reading in the context of family life using surviving diaries and letters—N. Tadmor, ‘“In the even my wife read to me”: women, reading and household life in the eighteenth century’, in J. Raven, H. Small, and N. Tadmor (eds.), *The practice and representation of reading in England* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 162–174.

¹⁴⁹ Sometimes such papers are catalogued although the extent and depth of cataloguing varies. In other cases the papers are uncatalogued and too voluminous to search.

¹⁵⁰ Typically such records are found in personal papers among family and estate papers of wealthier families, or among the records of more middling businessmen.

holistic impression of reading as an activity, identifying overall trends and recurring patterns, can be obtained.¹⁵¹

For this thesis, hundreds of contemporary diaries, letters and memoirs were checked for references to reading, but it was feasible in the time available to study only a fraction to identify the key trends.¹⁵² More records were found from early in the 19th century than earlier in the period. Although such a bias might appear to suggest increased reading activity later in the period, a more likely explanation is that it reflects the fashion for published autobiographies in the 19th century; because of the age of the writers, such memoirs referred to reading experiences at the start of the 19th century.¹⁵³ The few autobiographies referring back to events in the mid and late 18th century were in the minority. Earlier references were found in surviving diaries and letters examined, but the latter were impractical to search beyond those available in print and in a number of local archives.¹⁵⁴ Even then, it was only possible to look through a fraction of the surviving letters because they hardly ever mentioned reading, and the time taken to search them comprehensively would not be repaid in terms of useful references found.¹⁵⁵

References to reading tend to be rare across all potentially relevant sources, but particularly so in diaries which tended to focus on recording social events, trips and business activities. Rarely was there enough space to record more detailed accounts of other incidental activities such as reading. The physical format of many diaries—particularly pocket books—was probably a factor, since only a tiny amount of space was allowed for each

¹⁵¹ Many Scottish working-class autobiographies can be traced using J. Burnett, D. Vincent, and D. Mayall (eds.), *The Autobiography of the Working Class: An Annotated Critical Bibliography. Volume I: 1790–1900* (Brighton, 1984).

¹⁵² Local archives searched in this way included the Universities of Dundee and St Andrews, Dundee City Archives, and Perth and Kinross Council Archive. National archives checked were the NAS and NLS.

¹⁵³ Burnett et al, *Autobiography of the Working Class. Volume I*, pp. xiv-xv.

¹⁵⁴ Even in local archives it was only practical to search collections that were either well indexed, or to take pot-luck in diving into some of the uncatalogued items.

¹⁵⁵ Checking letters for other research questions might throw up in the process more references to reading and be a more practical way—albeit beyond the scope of this study—of tackling this voluminous body of source material. Even then the frequency of references to reading would depend on the individual letter writer and the context in which they were writing.

day: rarely enough to record more than a few items in summary, and little space for recording other events. By contrast, more letters mention reading, though again very much a minority of cases.¹⁵⁶ Such references to reading tended to focus on books of interest to both the writer and reader of the letter: for example a book that both were reading at the same time, or a book that one was lending to the other, as in the Wedderburn example in the previous chapter. Other forms of reading—for example reading newspapers—were rarely mentioned in letters. In terms of volume, the greatest number of reading references can be found in memoirs and autobiographies, almost all written late in life and reflecting back on earlier reading experiences, particularly childhood.¹⁵⁷ Even here, however, references to reading are relatively rare, albeit more prevalent than in the other categories of contemporary accounts, usually enthusiastic readers reflecting on their earliest reading experiences. The lack of references to reading does not mean that people were not reading, nor even that they considered it an unimportant activity; so a mention of reading implies that much greater significance.

Whatever their short-comings, the sources described above allow us to begin to explore a number of questions. For example how did Scottish readers manage to fit in reading with the rest of their lives? How did reading fit alongside existing social activities? To what extent did Scotland's distinctive religious inheritance and cultures affect attitudes towards literacy and reading? Finally how was reading viewed by different groups within society? Such questions have been considered by reading historians in other countries, but not before in Scotland.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ Letters are particularly voluminous to search and only a tiny fraction of those surviving could be checked for this research, focusing on those available in local archives, and even then only checking them in a summary way.

¹⁵⁷ Published autobiographies were particularly convenient to check, especially those available locally and in central libraries such as the NLS.

¹⁵⁸ For example N. Tadmor, 'In the even my wife read to me', pp. 167–171; T. Barnard, 'Reading in eighteenth-century Ireland: public and private pleasures', in B Cunningham and M. Kennedy (eds.), *The experience of reading: Irish historical perspectives* (Dublin, 1999), pp. 67–69; and H. Murray, 'Readers and Society', in P.L. Fleming, G. Gallichan, and Y. Lamonde (eds.), *History of the Book in Canada, Volume I: Beginnings to 1840* (Toronto, 2004), pp. 172–175.

Childhood reading experiences

Early experiences of reading are often the only times that memoirs mention reading at all, even though the individuals concerned might have continued to read through their lives. The memoirs of geologist Hugh Miller (1802–1856), for example, record his earliest reading experiences, including a progression in what he read once he realised that ‘the art of reading is the art of finding stories in books, and from that moment reading became one of the most delightful of my amusements’.¹⁵⁹ Initially he sat after school reading biblical stories such as Joseph, Samson and the Philistines, or David and Goliath. Later he moved to fables and fairytales such as Jack and the Bean-stalk, Blue Beard, Sinbad the Sailor, and Aladdin and the Lamp. Next came Homer’s *Odyssey* and *Iliad*, and Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*, closely followed by predominantly adventure and travel books, both factual ones such as the biographies of Raleigh and Drake, and fictional accounts such as *Robinson Crusoe*, *Gulliver’s Travels*, the *Adventures of Philip Quarll*. Hugh’s uncle James encouraged the boy’s taste for Scottish subjects, giving him a copy of Blind Harry’s *Wallace*. However, most of the volumes that Hugh read were ‘part of a very miscellaneous collection of books made by my father’ which he inherited, but he found that many were missing, for example all but one volume of Cook’s *Voyages*, and the latter two volumes of Mrs Radcliffe’s *Mysteries of Udolpho*.¹⁶⁰ Yet the small collection provided the young boy with ample reading material until later when he could borrow or buy more.¹⁶¹

A similar progression from religious reading to wider reading is seen in the earliest reading experiences of scientist Mary Somerville (1780–1872). Her mother taught her to read the Bible and before she was eight or nine Mary had read of her own choosing *Arabian Nights*, *Robinson Crusoe*, and *Pilgrim’s Progress*.¹⁶² As she grew up, Somerville developed specialised interests in reading the Classics in the original Latin and

¹⁵⁹ Roberston, *Hugh Miller*, p. 27.

¹⁶⁰ Miller presumed that the others were lost at sea with his father when his ship sunk.

¹⁶¹ Robertson, *Hugh Miller*, pp. 27–29.

¹⁶² D. McMillan (ed), *Queen of Science: Personal Recollections of Mary Somerville* (Edinburgh, 2001), pp. 15, 17.

mathematics books. However she had wider reading interests, particularly as a young woman in Edinburgh, and as a relief from algebra read poetry and novels:

Poetry was my great resource on these occasions, but at a later period I read novels, *The Old English Baron*, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, *A Romance of the Forest*, &c. I was very fond of ghost and witch stories, both of which were believed in by most of the common people, and many of the better educated ...¹⁶³

Hugh Miller's childhood reading took place in the first two decades of the 19th century; Mary Somerville's in the last two of the 18th century. Earlier still are the recollections of Joanna Baillie (1762–1851). Aged nine and about to be sent to boarding school in Glasgow, she was still a reluctant reader but this changed when her sister showed her a copy of Ossian's poems and Joanna 'was delighted with them ... the first book which I read willingly and with pleasure'.¹⁶⁴ In her teens she began to borrow playbooks and tried to read *Paradise Lost* but gave up, only successfully reading it when she was 18.¹⁶⁵ Of more immediate interest, as with Mary Somerville, were ghost stories which 'had a good deal to do in arousing my imagination'.¹⁶⁶

Earlier still are the recollections of Mrs Grant of Laggan who as a toddler went to North America in 1758 with her Scottish parents, after her army father was posted there. Until the family returned to Scotland in 1768, her reading was restricted to things at home, emphasising once again the importance of reading material at home for reading opportunities, particularly during childhood:

¹⁶³ McMillan, *Queen of Science*, p. 55.

¹⁶⁴ D. McMillan (ed), *The Scotswoman at Home and Abroad: Non-Fictional Writing 1700–1900* (Glasgow, 1999), p. 92.

¹⁶⁵ McMillan, *The Scotswoman at Home and Abroad*, pp. 94–95.

¹⁶⁶ McMillan, *The Scotswoman at Home and Abroad*, p. 96.

We had no books but the Bible and some military treatises; but I grew familiar with the Old Testament, and a Scotch sergeant brought me Blind Harry's *Wallace*, which, by the aid of said sergeant, I conned so diligently, that I not only understood the broad Scotch, but caught an admiration for heroism and an enthusiasm for Scotland, that ever since has been like a principle of life.¹⁶⁷

Often parents encouraged their children to read.¹⁶⁸ In some cases, however, there is evidence of tension between adult and child when it comes to reading, particularly over what was suitable to read; and in these instances, reading in secret would become necessary.¹⁶⁹ Hugh Miller recalled that when he was at school circa 1815 and transferred from the English to the Latin form, he found the Latin *Rudiments* textbook 'by far the dullest book I had ever seen', in stark contrast to the story books he enjoyed reading.¹⁷⁰ As a result, he did not study Latin properly but instead memorised the English answer to the translation (conveniently read out by the schoolmaster at the start of each day), allowing him to spend the rest of the day reading books of amusement or even Classics in translation undetected.¹⁷¹

Some of them, save in the language in which they were written, were identical with the books proper to the place. I remember perusing by stealth in this way, Dryden's *Virgil*, and the *Ovid* of Dryden and his friends, while Ovid's own *Ovid*, and Virgil's own *Virgil*, lay beside me, sealed up in the fine old tongue which I was thus throwing away my only chance of acquiring.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁷ J.P. Grant (ed.), *Memoir and Correspondence of Mrs Grant of Laggan*, Vol. I (London, 1845), p. 6.

¹⁶⁸ Examples of parents encouraging their children to read include A.B. Todd, *The Poetical Works of A.B. Todd with Autobiography and Portrait* (Edinburgh and London, 1906), pp. 15–18; Anon., 'Life of a Handloom Weaver, Written by Himself', *The Commonwealth*, 1857 April 25, p. 1; and J.G. Bertram, *Some Memories of Books, Authors and Events* (Westminster, 1893), pp. 26–27.

¹⁶⁹ A. Somerville, *The Autobiography of a Working Man* (London, 1848), p. 57.

¹⁷⁰ Robertson, *Hugh Miller*, p. 44.

¹⁷¹ Roberston, *Hugh Miller*, p. 44.

¹⁷² Roberston, *Hugh Miller*, pp. 44–45.

Over time, this covert activity spread, with Miller telling stories to his classmates, initially based on story books that he had read: ‘the story of Gulliver, and Philip Quarll, and Robinson Crusoe – of Sinbad, and Ulysses, and Mrs Radcliffe’s heroine Emily, with, of course, the love-passages left out’ then later he made up new stories for them.¹⁷³ The schoolmaster was aware of this but did not punish Miller, instead calling him Sennachie, the Gaelic word for storyteller.¹⁷⁴

Another secret reader was Mary Somerville, who recalled that her mother tolerated her reading as a young girl but her unmarried aunt Janet disapprovingly remarked ‘I wonder you let Mary waste her time in reading, she never *shews* (sews) more than if she were a man’.¹⁷⁵ By contrast Mary’s father, Lieutenant William Fairfax, on returning from sea was horrified by the primitive state of his daughter’s reading and tried to improve things by having her read aloud to him after breakfast each day a chapter from the Bible and some of the *Spectator*.¹⁷⁶ Her uncle Rev. Thomas Somerville also encouraged her when she visited, particularly in her study of Latin and Classics texts which she could not study at the village school in Burntisland, unlike the boys.¹⁷⁷ However as her interests specialised in mathematics, even her father became so concerned at her reading them so much that she increasingly read in secret.¹⁷⁸ In her paper about the women of an 18th century Scottish gentry family, Glover argued that while male and female readers often read the same books there were nevertheless separate cultures of reading.¹⁷⁹ According to Glover’s argument male reading was associated with learning and the study, while female reading was less highly regarded, tended to be more communal, and had the potential to distract girls and women from learning and practising useful household management skills. Such attitudes may have been present in Scotland at this time, but the only hint of

¹⁷³ Robertson, *Hugh Miller*, p. 45.

¹⁷⁴ Robertson, *Hugh Miller*, pp. 45–46.

¹⁷⁵ McMillan, *Queen of Science*, pp. 22–23.

¹⁷⁶ McMillan, *Queen of Science*, p. 17.

¹⁷⁷ McMillan, *Queen of Science*, p. 24.

¹⁷⁸ McMillan, *Queen of Science*, p. 42.

¹⁷⁹ K. Glover, ‘The Female Mind: Scottish Enlightenment Femininity and the World of Letters. A Case Study of the Women of the Fletcher of Saltoun Family in the Mid-Eighteenth Century’, *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies*, Vol. 25 (2005), p. 7.

them found in the primary sources research for this thesis is the Somerville example. More clues might yet be found in future, for example in issues of Scottish periodicals of the time. But such research is beyond the practical scope of this thesis.

It is probably significant that those examples of secret reading found were recorded in memoirs compiled later in life. If readers were snatching hidden reading opportunities here and there, whether because others disapproved of their reading or because they were too busy, then such an activity could easily have been missed by accounts written at the time, letters especially so, if it was an activity kept secret from close friends and relatives.¹⁸⁰ Secret reading may have also broken down along class lines, encountering less disapproval the more educated the relatives. There could also be gender factors at play, even if these are harder to detect in the surviving sources, with reading by young women disapproved of if it was not going to be of great use to them in later life. Either or both aspects may have been a factor in Mary Somerville's case, where her father and uncle approved of her reading while her unmarried aunt did not.

Detailed records of books read during childhood itself are rare in Scotland, although at least two exist from this period.¹⁸¹ One is the notebooks of Marjory Fleming (1803–1811), the daughter of a magistrate in Kirkcaldy, Fife.¹⁸² In the last two years of her life she was encouraged by her cousin Isabella Keith to keep notebooks recording her every thought and the three volumes were preserved after her death and published.¹⁸³

¹⁸⁰ Another problem is the limited record that diaries and letters provide of daily activities: the former because they are usually not as detailed as for example Rev. Ridpath's diary, particularly if squeezed into compact pocket books; the latter because they are usually written to the point about matters in hand, rarely reading.

¹⁸¹ Detailed contemporary records of childhood reading are rare worldwide but studies from other countries include Baggerman, 'The Cultural Universe of a Dutch Child', pp. 129–134; and Colclough, 'Procuring Books and Consuming Texts', pp. 21–44.

¹⁸² K. Sutherland, 'Fleming, Marjory (1803–1811)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9707>]

¹⁸³ A. Ponsonby, *Scottish and Irish diaries from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century with an introduction* (London, 1927), p. 68. The Marjory Fleming papers are in the NLS, MS.1096–1100. Published versions include F. Sidgwick (ed.), *The Complete Marjory Fleming her Journals, Letters & Verses* (London, 1934).

Reading material varied from serious and educational works through to lighter material which Fleming preferred:

The poetical works of tomas Gray are most beautifull especially one the death of a favourite Cat who was drowned in a Tub of fishes—When books are funy & amusing I am very fond of them such as the arabian nights entertainment & the Tales of the Castal &c.¹⁸⁴

Other novels that she read included Mrs Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho* and Mrs Brunton's *Self-Control*, and conduct books by Maria Edgeworth and Hannah More.¹⁸⁵ Poems are also mentioned frequently, and it seems that Marjory had been encouraged to learn these by heart: Thomas Gray a particular favourite, with James Thomson, Sir Walter Scott, and Robert Burns. Fleming was particularly fond of history, which she read about and composed a lengthy poem about Mary Queen of Scots.¹⁸⁶ At one point, she mentioned the *Spectator*, which she may have read; similarly the *Newgate Calendar* which intrigued her with its list of crimes.¹⁸⁷ There is no doubt that she read the Bible frequently, preferring the Old Testament, but having little liking for books of sermons.¹⁸⁸ Fleming's reading was diverse, and her father's position as a magistrate probably increased her range of reading opportunities beyond those of many other children of the same age. Nevertheless her example, while relatively unusual, is useful as an example of what a child of that age might like to read, given the opportunity.

¹⁸⁴ Sidgwick, *Marjory Fleming*, p. 10.

¹⁸⁵ Fleming mentions several tales in Maria Edgeworth's *Parent's Assistant* and of Hannah More she comments 'Tawny Rachel and the Cottage cook are very good excellent books and so are all the cheap Repository books indeed' —Sidgwick, *Marjory Fleming*, p. 115.

¹⁸⁶ Isabella Keith wrote to Fleming's sister in April 1811 and mentioned that Marjory was 'very fond of History and is reading the history of Scotland at present in which she is much interested' —Sidgwick, *Marjory Fleming*, p. 179. Marjory's poem 'The Life of Mary Queen of Scots' is reproduced in Sidgwick, *Marjory Fleming*, pp. 115–148.

¹⁸⁷ Sidgwick, *Marjory Fleming*, Journal 3, p. 111; and Sidgwick, *Marjory Fleming*, Journal 3, p. 113.

¹⁸⁸ Sidgwick, *Marjory Fleming*, Journal 3, p. 118. Also 'Isabella teaches me to read my bible & tells me to be good and say my prayers' —Sidgwick, *Marjory Fleming*, Journal 3, p. 110.

The other known example of a Scottish child recording their reading contemporarily is the reading list kept by William Lyon Mackenzie (1795–1861) from Dundee. In 1820 Mackenzie emigrated to Canada and became a notable journalist and politician.¹⁸⁹ His reading list covers his time in Scotland, listing 958 volumes read between 1806 and 1820, i.e. between the ages of circa 11 and 25. Unfortunately Mackenzie's original manuscript list is lost but a transcribed version exists in a biography published soon after he died.¹⁹⁰ Mackenzie's record like Marjory's is of most use as a guide to what he read rather than when, and Chapter 4 will consider this aspect in more detail. In terms of volume, however, he was reading on average over 60 volumes per year between 1806 and 1820, and must therefore have regularly devoted a considerable time to it.

Moving into adulthood and finding time for reading

William Lyon Mackenzie's reading record continues into early adulthood, and when considering readers of that age, other issues emerge, principally finding time for reading or fitting reading around the rest of their lives. This is likely to have applied across society, and even included the more easily found enthusiastic readers who for understandable and practical reasons had to fit their reading around other commitments. Some readers recalled for example how they tried to squeeze in reading at the start or the end of the day: Mrs Grant, for example, typically reading early in the morning, especially in the summer, although her usual reading pattern was disrupted in 1810:

This, however, has not been with me a reading summer—a most unusual thing, for the long morning, from five to nine, when no one disturbs me, used to be my time for every acquisition of this nature. But a constant succession of strangers, who came recommended to my attention, and the cares attendant

¹⁸⁹ C.F. Read, 'Mackenzie, William Lyon (1795–1861)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/17606>].

¹⁹⁰ The transcript is included in Appendix A of C. Lindsey, *The Life and Times of William Lyon Mackenzie* (Toronto, 1862), Vol. II, pp. 303–313. The original handwritten list has since been lost.

on a new establishment, threw me quite off my poise, and were the cause of my reading and writing less than ever I did in my life.¹⁹¹

At the other end of the social scale was farmer's son Robert White, near Yetholm, who read between five and six in the morning, an hour at dinner, and from six in the evening 'while day lasted'.¹⁹² Reading last thing at night depended upon having enough energy left to stay awake to read for a while, something that would be less likely to apply to people who had performed a hard day's manual or mental labour. Having sufficient light to read was also an additional problem when reading late at night—and an additional expense, as recorded by trainee weaver Robert Butler in the early 1800s. He

found ways and means, upon the Sabbath evenings, to spare a halfpenny for a candle, that I might be able to read Mr Boston's Fourfold State, to which I had taken a great liking.¹⁹³

Such a relatively poor worker finding money for a candle each Sabbath so that he could read at night shows how important the act of reading this book was to him. In wealthier households candles were a less scarce commodity, and this was probably the case when Mary Somerville used up her family's supply of candles as a young girl in Burntisland, sitting up late at night reading mathematics books.¹⁹⁴ Years later as a young woman in Edinburgh, she found that she had more freedom to read when she wanted to and recalled similar habits to Mrs Grant:

¹⁹¹ Grant, *Mrs Grant of Laggan*, Vol. I, p. 256.

¹⁹² R. White, *Autobiographical Notes* (Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, 1966), p. 5. Another reader who mentioned reading in the context of dinner was Andrew McGeorge, solicitor in Glasgow, whose diary notes 'While reading after dinner was surprised by hearing Miss I. announced, as she had given me no reason to expect her so soon in Glasgow'—NLS, MSS 2772, 1805 May 21.

¹⁹³ R. Butler, *Narrative of the Life and Travels of Serjeant B___ Written by Himself* (London, 1823), pp. 13–14. Two decades later another working-class reader by candlelight was weaver's son Alexander Bain at Aberdeen—A. Bain, *Autobiography* (London, 1904), pp. 21–22.

¹⁹⁴ McMillan, *Queen of Science*, p. 42.

I rose at day-break, and after dressing, I wrapped myself in a blanket from my bed on account of the excessive cold—having no fire at that hour—and read algebra or the classics till breakfast time.¹⁹⁵

Occasionally, accounts mention people reading during their lunch breaks, both readers working in the town, for example a shop worker in 1816, and others working on the land.¹⁹⁶ In these examples, readers living at similar times but differentiated by town and country were following similar patterns in their reading habits—namely taking the opportunity during their lunch breaks to read books. But reading the books might be only part of the time-factor since additional time was needed to borrow them from a library. In that case, the country-based reader could have been at a disadvantage, particularly if the nearest library was at a distance in a town. By contrast, the town-based reader may have required less time to borrow the same books before reading them. Even in the same town Gray Library's borrowing registers reveal how different readers had differing opportunities to borrow books. Gray Library was an endowed free public town library in Haddington, very unusual in its day, but which probably provides a useful guide to how other people borrowed books from a circulating library.¹⁹⁷ Opening times for Gray Library were stated in the printed library rules, and can be inferred from the borrowing registers.¹⁹⁸ According to the rules printed with the 1828 catalogue, 'The Librarian will give out and receive books at the Library, on Tuesdays and Thursdays, betwixt the hours of 12 and 1'.¹⁹⁹ This may have been the case by 1828, but the earlier borrowing registers

¹⁹⁵ McMillan, *Queen of Science*, p. 55.

¹⁹⁶ For the shop-worker see 'Jacques'. 'Glimpses of a Chequered Life', *The Commonwealth*, 1 Nov 1856. For the two farm-workers reading in the fields during their breaks see Somerville, *The Autobiography of a Working Man*, pp. 55–56, 59; and Todd, *The Poetical Works of A.B. Todd with Autobiography and Portrait*, pp. 45–46.

¹⁹⁷ Such libraries were usually run by booksellers and would thus have been open and available to borrowers throughout the working week and on Saturdays too.

¹⁹⁸ The lending registers for 1732–1796 and 1803–1816 are part of the Gray Library records in the NLS MS 16446–16482. For this research the borrowings (NLS MS 16480–16481) were entered into a relational database with linked tables for borrowings, book details, and borrower information. See Appendix 1 for more information about this process.

¹⁹⁹ *Catalogue of the books in the town of Haddington's library. MDCCCXXVIII* (Haddington, 1828), p. iv.

indicate that from the 1730s onwards people borrowed books on most days of the week, even occasionally on Sundays.²⁰⁰ Particularly popular days were Monday through to Wednesday, but from the 1780s onwards, Saturday borrowing increased until, by the 1810s, it had become the most popular day followed by Wednesday: 27% of 1810s borrowings on Saturday and 24% on Wednesdays. Saturday borrowing was favoured by certain groups such as lawyers and clerks, whereas merchants and artisans were more likely to borrow during the week. Females, particularly teenagers, favoured Saturday borrowing in the 1810s: 55% of female borrowings during the 1810s were on Saturday and 28% on Wednesday; for teenage girls the equivalent figures were 64% and 18%. There would have been individual reasons, but the consistent pattern of borrowing day by occupation suggests that people were structuring their weeks differently for work-related reasons. Fortunately this library at this time, probably like commercial circulating libraries open throughout the week, could cater for such varied borrowing patterns.

So, many readers had limited opportunities to read, and would struggle to snatch reading opportunities. By contrast, a rare example of what was almost a professional reader was Rev. Mr George Ridpath (1716–1772), minister of Stichel parish in Roxburghshire.²⁰¹ From his unusually detailed diary in the late 1750s and early 1760s, it is clear that reading was his favourite pastime, even if for him too it had to fit around other commitments, particularly his ministry and any need to travel around the Borders or to Edinburgh for work reasons. Reading could be interrupted at short-notice if an unexpected visitor turned up, or if he was called away himself.²⁰² However, by and large, he seems to have filled his days with reading, being able to borrow books extensively from friends as well as from the nearby subscription library at Kelso, and so gathered books around him before reading

²⁰⁰ Sunday borrowing was extremely rare, accounting for only 2.3% of Gray Library borrowings with known days.

²⁰¹ Stichel is a rural parish 3 miles from the town of Kelso.

²⁰² *DGR*, p. 18, 1755 July 11: ‘Was beginning to read Lahontan when James Turnbull and his neighbour, the Laird of Middleton, called in their way to Home Byres. Followed them and dined there and staid till the evening’; and *DGR*, p. 215, 1758 November 24: ‘Was extracting from Rapin when I got a letter from Robert Turnbull at Mr Pollock’s desiring me to dine there. Rode down with Nancy and stayed at Sprouston till after tea’.

them at his leisure. Usually he read in the evening or at night.²⁰³ If he had time to read in the day, he read heavier-going books, keeping lighter works such as Horace or Homer for the evening or bedtime. At several points Ridpath recorded his reading plan, as in 1755:

Wednesday, October 15th – Read in the morning some of Galter; in the day Stanley; part of his account of Thales, which entertained me much; in the evening Cicero's *Letters to Atticus*, beginning where I left off last spring near the beginning of vol. 5, and at night most of Madam Dacier's Preface to her Terence. This is my plan of reading for part at least of the winter before me.²⁰⁴

Invariably such plans might be soon pushed aside by pressure of work or changing circumstances, but it is clear that Ridpath intended to read to a pattern.²⁰⁵ The only day of the week when he rarely noted reading for pleasure was Sunday, presumably when too busy with church business, or for moral reasons, with Sundays kept for God.²⁰⁶ However this was also often the day when he was a dinner guest, sometimes of local laird Sir Robert Pringle, giving Ridpath the chance to read books at Sir Robert's or to pore over the latest newspapers.²⁰⁷ When, on one occasion in February 1760, he was too ill to preach on the Sunday, he stayed at home and read Plato instead.²⁰⁸ Thus illness also provided an

²⁰³ Three-quarters of timed reading references fall into this period with the remainder during daytime hours.

²⁰⁴ *DGR*, pp. 34–35, 1755 October 15.

²⁰⁵ *DGR*, p. 43, 1755 November 28: 'At night I often find myself so much exhausted as to be unable without some violence to follow a plan of reading. Hence am often led to vary it'.

²⁰⁶ An alternative explanation might be that he preferred to keep Sundays for religious reading and did not record this practice so much in his diary. But this seems unlikely, partly because of the detail of his diary record, and also because of his non-religious reading while dining regularly on Sundays at Sir Robert's and his choice of Plato when he was too ill to attend church to present his own sermon (see above).

²⁰⁷ For example *DGR*, p. 44, 1755 December 7.

²⁰⁸ *DGR*, pp. 301–302, 1760 February 23 and 24.

unusually good opportunity to read, something that two working-class readers had also noted in their memoirs.²⁰⁹

Solitary versus group reading

Much of Ridpath's reading seems to have been done on his own, in private, and was probably silent. However his diary also contains hints of another form of reading: shared reading aloud. Some 'read out' references took place at home, and may indicate that Ridpath was reading aloud to other members of his household, perhaps his sister or mother.²¹⁰ On one occasion Ridpath noted that William Home minister of Polwarth 'read *Douglas*, but so badly that I could form no right judgement of it'.²¹¹ Two years later Walter Anderson, minister of Chirnside, read to Ridpath the introduction to his work in progress, 'a parallel between the Civil Wars of England in Charles 1st's time and the wars of the League in France'.²¹² At this time Ridpath was being used as a critical listener, to pass comments on a work in progress.

Communal reading of the kind referred to occasionally by Ridpath has been noted by historians of reading in other countries.²¹³ Admittedly it is mentioned only rarely in the surviving Scottish contemporary accounts, but this includes the memoirs of geologist Hugh Miller who recalled as a young boy reading aloud to his uncle James, a harness-maker, who worked until ten at night:

²⁰⁹ W. McCombie, *Memoirs of Alexander Bethune, embracing selections from his Correspondence and Literary Remains* (Aberdeen, 1845), p. 29; and 'Jacques'. 'Glimpses of a Chequered Life'.

²¹⁰ Works 'read out' in this way included the *Scots Magazine* (1756 November 6) and Guthrie's *Memoirs* (1758 April 8). His sister regularly carried books over for him.

²¹¹ *DGR*, p. 125, 1757 March 26. Paul, *Diary of George Ridpath*, p. xix describes how a number of local clergy were rebuked by the Presbytery after attending an Edinburgh performance of *Douglas* (written by John Home, sometime minister of Athelstaneford in East Lothian). Ridpath did not attend the play, though his friend Matthew Dysart minister of Eccles did.

²¹² *DGR*, p. 258, 1759 July 10.

²¹³ See for example N. Tadmor, 'In the even my wife read to me', pp. 162–174.

Such incessant occupation left him little time for reading; but he often found some one to read beside him during the day; and in the winter evenings his portable bench used to be brought from his shop at the other end of the dwelling, into the family sitting-room, and placed beside the circle round the hearth, where his brother Alexander, my younger uncle, whose occupation left his evenings free, would read aloud from some interesting volume for the general benefit – placing himself always at the opposite side of the bench, so as to share in the light of the worker. Occasionally the family circle would be widened by the accession of from two to three intelligent neighbours, who would drop in to listen; and then the book, after a space, would be laid aside, in order that its contents might be discussed in conversation ... I soon learned to bring my story-books to his workshop, and became, in a small way, one of his readers.²¹⁴

Mrs Grant recalled reading aloud in a domestic environment when she was in her 70s when she outlined her typical day to a friend.²¹⁵ She still read privately in the early morning but had reduced the time from four to just one or two hours. In the afternoon if no visitors arrived she might read too. As well as playing chess after dinner with the young relative who lived with her, they regularly took turns to read aloud to each other.²¹⁶ Mrs Grant also advised other people of the importance of reading aloud. This included friends to whom she recommended books in 1819 ‘that would be such an amusement for the winter evenings as all members of the family might be entertained by’²¹⁷. Within her own family she told her youngest daughter in 1808 to ‘read your chapters socially together’ by turns.²¹⁸ The same daughter was plagued by ill-health later, and Mrs Grant told a friend in 1819 that she read to the girl daily ‘for she was never too ill to converse or to hear

²¹⁴ Roberston, *Hugh Miller*, pp. 33–34. Another reference to reading aloud can be found in the memoirs of shop worker ‘Jacques’, ‘Glimpses of a Chequered Life’, in his case reading aloud to a work colleague during meal breaks.

²¹⁵ Grant, *Mrs Grant of Laggan*, Vol. III, p. 154.

²¹⁶ Grant, *Mrs Grant of Laggan*, Vol. III, pp. 154–156.

²¹⁷ Grant, *Mrs Grant of Laggan*, Vol. II, pp. 230–231.

²¹⁸ Grant, *Mrs Grant of Laggan*, Vol. I, p. 160.

reading'.²¹⁹ Reading aloud would also have helped Mrs Susanna Chalmers in Aberdeen in the 1780s, an enthusiastic reader who lost use of her eyesight and could no longer read.²²⁰ Such a practice could also have helped people who could never read, or, who like Hugh Miller's uncle, were too busy to read themselves. Within a family setting it might also have encouraged interest in particular texts or subjects, particularly where the older members of the family such as parents decided what was to be read communally of an evening.²²¹

Haddington's Gray Library borrowing registers may also contain more subtle references to reading aloud or at least shared reading in a family setting. In 1807 schoolmaster James Johnston borrowed three volumes 'for Mrs Fraser's family' and in 1816 Jess and Christian Dods took it in turns to borrow all four volumes of Johnson's *Works*.²²² Such references are less obvious, and it is likely that the practice of reading aloud remains largely invisible among the rare surviving library borrowing registers, particularly since most only record the name of a single borrower.²²³ Even among diarists and similar sources, it remains largely unrecorded, although the activity may have continued to be widespread. This is particularly likely for regular ritual reading, such as a family reading the Bible together. Andrew Usher (1782–1855) who founded the Edinburgh whisky dynasty, recalled in his memoirs his early childhood near Melrose in Roxburghshire, and his father James Usher, laird of Toftfield, sitting down with the family and servants and reading to them from the Bible.²²⁴ Such a practice was commemorated by Robert Burns in his 1785 poem *A Cottar's Saturday Night*, inspiring numerous illustrations.

²¹⁹ Grant, *Mrs Grant of Laggan*, Vol. II, p. 211.

²²⁰ Luckily Mrs Chalmers' eyesight improved, at least for a while as she wrote to her son in 1790: 'I think it is a great mercy, that my sight is so far restored that I can read a little' — University of Aberdeen Special Collections, MS 3080/3, letter 1790 January 30.

²²¹ Usually borrowing records where they survive just record the name of a single borrower with no additional clues to the intended reader or readers if different.

²²² The volumes were borrowed in January 1816: Jess borrowing volume 1 on Wednesday 10th, then volume 2 the next Saturday, Christian borrowing volume 3 the next Wednesday, then Jess borrowing volume 4 on Saturday 20th.

²²³ This is particularly the case with borrowings for other people: something that Gray Library unusually explicitly recorded because of its rules from the 1780s onwards.

²²⁴ C.M. Usher (ed.), *A History of the Usher Family in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1956), p.35.



Figure 2: Sir David Wilkie's 'The Cotter's Saturday Night' (1837)

© Glasgow Museums. Licensor www.scran.ac.uk



Figure 3: From *Poems by Robert Burns* (Edinburgh, 1801)

Religious reading on Sundays appears to have been particularly important in Scotland, and was noted as early as the 1720s by John Macky writing of his fellow countrymen:

Certainly no Nation on Earth observes the Sabbath with that Strictness of Devotion and Resignation to the Will of God: They all pray in their Families before they go to Church, and between Sermons they fast; after Sermon every Body retires to his own Home, and reads some Book of Devotion till Supper.²²⁵

Later diaries and memoirs repeatedly refer to Sunday reading practices with an emphasis on the suitability of reading religious works such as Bibles and collections of sermons. The example of trainee weaver Robert Butler has already been mentioned in the context of buying candles to read on the Sabbath evening.²²⁶ Another example is James Boswell who rarely touched on religious matters in his detailed daily journals while living at Edinburgh but did record on one Sunday in 1774 that

I rose and breakfasted; but being too late for Church, I read a part of my Bible and began the life of Bishop Sanderson by Walton, which I have heard Mr Samuel Johnson commend much and which I have borrowed from the Advocates' Library. I read [it] today, all but some leaves which were awanting in the copy which I had. I shall get the defect supplied ... I resolved that amidst business and every other worldly pursuit I should still keep in mind religious duty.²²⁷

²²⁵ J. Macky, *A Journey through Scotland. In Familiar Letters from a Gentleman Here to his Friend Abroad. Being the third volume which compleats Great Britain* (London, 1723), p. 3.

²²⁶ Butler, *Narrative of the Life and Travels of Serjeant B___*, pp. 13–14. Two decades later another working-class reader by candlelight was weaver's son Alexander Bain at Aberdeen—Bain, *Autobiography*, pp. 21–22.

²²⁷ H.M. Milne (ed.), *Boswell's Edinburgh Journals 1767–1786* (Edinburgh, 2001), p. 121.

Some accounts reveal that the question of suitability of reading was sometimes a concern on other days of the week as well.²²⁸ This was generally when some members of a family disapproved of people reading anything other than devotional works. Typically younger members of the family were eager to read more widely, and—at extremes—they might have been compelled to read in secret, as the only way they could read the books they wished to.

Reading's interaction with existing social activities

The interaction between religion and reading is a complex one, involving long-standing practices potentially clashing with new and expanding reading habits. It is likely that other aspects of traditional life could be affected in a similar way but these can be harder to judge from the surviving evidence. One example is oral culture, touched on earlier in the example of Hugh Miller reading books aloud to his uncle while he worked. At the same time Sir Walter Scott was recording and publishing traditional stories and songs in his *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*.²²⁹ This followed an earlier more informal tradition of oral culture transferring into print via broadsides.²³⁰ Such printing provided an alternative method of transmission for oral stories and songs, but it is less clear how the new print culture fitted alongside oral traditions in, for example, a domestic setting. Did an increasing wish to read threaten conversation and song in a family environment? Frequently in contemporary accounts, eager readers write of snatching moments to read, but how much was this done alongside existing household activities, and how much was there a clash?²³¹

²²⁸ For example Somerville, *Autobiography of a Working Man*, pp. 56–57 describes how a father tried very hard to encourage his young son to read religious works.

²²⁹ W. Scott, *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border: consisting of historical and romantic ballads, collected in the Southern Counties of Scotland; with a few of modern date, founded upon local tradition. In two volumes* (Kelso, 1802).

²³⁰ E.J. Cowan and M. Paterson, *Folk in print: Scotland's chapbook heritage, 1750-1850* (Edinburgh, 2007).

²³¹ For example Bain, *Autobiography*, pp. 21–22; Butler, *Narrative of the Life and Travels of Serjeant B___*, pp. 13–14; White, *Autobiographical Notes*, p. 5; Anonymous, 'Life of a Letterpress Printer, Written by Himself', *The Commonwealth*, 1857 February 7, p. 3; McCombie, *Memoirs of Alexander Bethune*, p.29; and 'Jacques', 'Glimpses of a Chequered Life'.

The issue of privacy, where people read, particularly if they sought to read in solitude, is relevant. While little commented on in Scotland, Roche described changing attitudes to domestic space and privacy in 18th century Paris.²³² In Scotland some fortunate readers such as Reverend Ridpath, as most ministers, would have had a dedicated private study space for writing sermons, even if it was only a desk with books scattered around. Most people who wanted to read probably had no private space of their own, and had to read with others around, snatch opportunities at night or in the morning, or use a public reading space if available.

Public reading spaces included reading rooms and coffee rooms, increasingly available throughout Scotland from the closing decades of the 18th century. Such facilities were used particularly by local businessmen seeking to find out news and to network.²³³ One reader who fitted in some of his reading activities in this way was the Dundee merchant Thomas Handyside Baxter. Baxter's diary from November 1810 to August 1811 records that he visited the coffee room in Dundee typically three or four times a week, including on Sundays.²³⁴ Much of the time he was seeking news, eagerly reading the newspapers and dispatches as they arrived, demonstrating both how keen he was to follow the latest news, and the important role that institutions such as coffee rooms played in providing access to news publications.²³⁵ It is likely that other businessmen, both in Dundee and further afield, would have behaved similarly.

In Baxter's case, visiting the coffee room probably had a partial social dimension, something also seen in the informal book clubs springing up at this time. Many of these clubs were run by working-class men. One weaver's son recalled going along with his father in the 1820s one evening, his father dressed in his Sunday clothes and the boy

²³² D. Roche, *The people of Paris: an essay in popular culture in the 18th century* (Leamington Spa, 1987), especially pp. 116–117 and 239.

²³³ M. Ellis, *The coffee house*.

²³⁴ University of Dundee Archives, Thomas Handyside Baxter diary, MS184/1/1.

²³⁵ Often he visited the coffee room after tea, waiting for the Coach to bring the latest newspapers—for example 1811 May 12: 'the Coach came in - no news'.

carrying the book to be returned, a volume of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.²³⁶ As he recalled, the conversation at the club revolved around mainly political topics: ‘the Reform Bill, Johnny Russell, Earl Grey, and other political leaders of the time.’²³⁷ This reference is particularly important because it shows how working-class men participated in informal reading societies, an aspect of reading habits otherwise largely invisible in the historical records. In this case reading was only part of the agenda, and the books exchanged at the club would have been pored over at home as convenient. But the chance for lively conversation and debate was probably even more important.

Ultimately, the extent to which people could fit reading into their lives depended on how much they could control their own life. At one extreme, there was George Ridpath, a professional reader who, despite his work commitments, was able to devote most of his life to this activity. At the other extreme, many readers would have struggled to find time and would have been subject far more to the limitations of their own circumstances. A supportive family environment, including at times a family reading as a group, would have dictated to what extent people could read.

Influence on reading habits of distinctive religious inheritances

Macky observed a close relationship between religion and reading in early 18th century Scottish society, and Smout has commented on this in the context of the Cambuslang Revival in the 1740s, and the importance that local people placed on their Bible reading, and the shame they felt if they could not read the Bible themselves.²³⁸ However, it is necessary to be aware of the various religious inheritances throughout Scotland. For example, much attention by scholars of the 18th century has focused on the moderate clergy of Edinburgh and the surrounding areas, men often closely associated with the

²³⁶ J. Urie, *Reminiscences of Eighty Years* (Paisley, 1908), p. 28.

²³⁷ Urie, *Reminiscences*, pp. 29–31.

²³⁸ T.C. Smout, ‘Born Again at Cambuslang’, pp. 123 and 127.

Enlightenment.²³⁹ Yet at the other end of the religious spectrum, the Orthodox party was particularly strong in western Scotland, with a very different outlook on religion and the way that it should be practiced.²⁴⁰ How important was religious reading there, and how different from other parts of Scotland?

The interviews conducted at the time of the Cambuslang Revival suggest that there was a similar emphasis among the local community on the importance of Bible reading to elsewhere in Scotland.²⁴¹ However over subsequent decades, the Glasgow area produced a greater concentration of locally printed religious pamphlets and literature, a trend which can be detected continuing through into the early 19th century.²⁴² While some of these religious pamphlets would have been intended to be read by evangelical preachers, many were published at the instigation of local tradesmen such as weavers, suggesting that they were read far more widely than by the educated religious elite alone, and thus would have had a greater impact on the reading habits of the local population.

This example comes from just one part of Scotland, but demonstrates how different religious inheritances could influence local reading habits, and also how artisans and tradesmen could participate actively in the reading culture.

Evidence for reading: the Old Statistical Account

The interaction between religion and reading in the Glasgow area is a reminder of the potential for local variation of reading habits within Scotland. One nationwide source which might have provided more of an insight into such variation across the country is the

²³⁹ For example R.B. Sher, *Church and university in the Scottish Enlightenment*.

²⁴⁰ N.C. Landsmen, 'Presbyterians and Provincial Society: The Evangelical Enlightenment in the West of Scotland, 1740–1775', in J. Dwyer and R.B. Sher (eds.), *Sociability and Society in Eighteenth-Century Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1993), p. 195.

²⁴¹ N. Landsmen, 'Evangelists and Their Hearers: Popular Interpretation of Revivalist Preaching in Eighteenth-Century Scotland', *The Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 28 (1989), pp. 123 and 140.

²⁴² N. Landsmen, 'Presbyterians and Provincial Society', pp. 199–200. The early 19th century religious publishing can be tracked by studying the *English Short Title Catalogue* (<http://estc.bl.uk>).

Old Statistical Account compiled in the 1790s by Sir John Sinclair.²⁴³ Based on submissions by parish ministers across Scotland, the *Old Statistical Account* records details of parish life, and there are informative references to reading in a significant number of the parish returns. Admittedly many of these references concern education and the teaching of reading in schools, but others refer to wider reading habits and can be used to tease out broader reading patterns. Frustratingly they are too few to provide a comprehensive guide to the whole country, but nonetheless they expand on the overall picture of reading habits, and highlight some variation.

Firstly, several support the impression that reading in Scotland was a widespread skill, as discussed in Chapter 2. Only the Dunfermline account comments that ‘Many cannot read’.²⁴⁴ Far more common is the sentiment expressed in Mid Calder that ‘I know nobody in this parish, above 8 or 10 years of age, who cannot read’.²⁴⁵ Writing, however, seems to have been a much scarcer skill.

Other entries corroborate the impression of shepherds and similar workers reading in the fields in their lunch breaks, even to the extent that they were better read than other workers as a result.²⁴⁶ Only one account refers to few parishioners reading, that of Stromness in Orkney.²⁴⁷ Far more common are positive examples of reading, such as at Old Monkland where there was apparently ‘scarcely a family that does not regularly read the newspapers’.²⁴⁸ Similarly at Auchterderran in Fife ‘newspapers are very generally read and attended to’.²⁴⁹ Another reference to periodicals comes from Forfar:

²⁴³ For an overview of the history behind the *Old Statistical Account* together with examples of its contents see M. Steven, *Parish Life in Eighteenth-Century Scotland: A Review of the Old Statistical Account* (Aberdeen, 1995).

²⁴⁴ OSA, Vol. 13, p. 480.

²⁴⁵ OSA, Vol. 14, p. 361.

²⁴⁶ OSA, Vol. 7, p. 60.

²⁴⁷ OSA, Vol. 16, p. 464.

²⁴⁸ OSA, Vol. 7, p. 377.

²⁴⁹ OSA, Vol. 1, p. 457.

The subscriptions to the Encyclopedia Britannica, the Bee, and several periodical and other publications, scientific, religious, moral and political, are more numerous of late than could well have been expected; and they already have shed an evident lustre on the conversation of many.²⁵⁰

The power of reading to influence the opinions and conversations of parishioners is also praised in the Auchterderran account.²⁵¹ In this parish, however, religious reading predominated, and that is frequently mentioned elsewhere, sometimes breaking down along class lines, as at Kirkpatrick-Juxta in Dumfriesshire where several farmers read history, magazines and newspapers, whereas ‘the vulgar read almost nothing but books on religious subjects’, a matter of grave disapproval to Kirkpatrick-Juxta’s parish minister who would prefer that ministers encourage such parishioners to read texts of ‘a more rational and instructive nature’.²⁵² Not all farmer reading was praised so highly, however. At Glasford in Lanarkshire, farmers were criticised because they ‘read no books on agriculture; nor do they seek the company of those who might inspire them with a taste for improvement’.²⁵³ As a result, the local agricultural techniques were more backward than they should have been—a contrast with Auchtermuchty in Fife where farmers were beginning to read works of agricultural improvement leading to them adopting modern methods of husbandry.²⁵⁴

The *Old Statistical Account* also includes a few references to Gaelic reading practices. At Moulin in Perthshire, reading of Gaelic had apparently increased, helped by the recent publication of the New Testament in Gaelic.²⁵⁵ Similarly at Urray in Ross and Cromarty, several inhabitants could read the English Bible, but preferred to read in Gaelic, and were therefore ‘at pains to read the Gaelic New Testament, and Psalm Book.’²⁵⁶ It is frustrating

²⁵⁰ OSA, Vol. 6, p. 534.

²⁵¹ OSA, Vol. 1, p. 456.

²⁵² OSA, Vol. 4, p. 524.

²⁵³ OSA, Vol. 7, p. 143.

²⁵⁴ OSA, Vol. 6, p. 342.

²⁵⁵ OSA, Vol. 5, p. 64.

²⁵⁶ OSA, Vol. 7, p. 259.

that Gaelic reading practices during this time are otherwise so invisible. Yet Gaelic texts were published, so there must have been a market.

Conclusions

A significant challenge of this chapter was how to uncover effective evidence of a largely invisible activity. Only a fraction of letters, memoirs and diaries mentioned reading, and then usually only in the form of isolated references that can be difficult to interpret satisfactorily. The lack of references to reading is not too surprising given the constraints of the sources recording the activity, particularly diaries which tended to have limited space. Few records provided the detailed context of, for example, George Ridpath's daily diary or the comprehensive reading lists of William Lyon Mackenzie. The extent of the problem of uncovering evidence for reading is highlighted by this chapter's repeated reliance on specific individuals, including some such as Hugh Miller and Mary Somerville who, as published writers, were hardly typical of their time. Encouragingly, the types of reading habits that these individuals describe can also be found in the memoirs of other Scottish readers, including weavers, shepherds and shop-workers. Few such accounts comment on reading as a particularly rare activity, perhaps suggesting that it was more widespread than the records show.

Reading was by necessity a peripheral activity for many, perhaps most, readers, fitted in around the rest of their lives, and dependent on the time and energy they had available to read. Many references to reading concerned childhood reading, and one possible interpretation of this is that there were more opportunities for reading then, and that reading was—perhaps unsurprisingly for school-age learners—encouraged more than later in life. Certainly among adult readers, there are repeated references to people struggling to find time to read. Few had as much freedom to read as Ridpath. Nevertheless the repeated impression from the evidence is that reading was important to many of the people recorded, and that they were determined to find ways to fit it into their daily lives.

The importance of reading to broader swathes of society is supported by contemporary commentators such as the writers of the Old Statistical Account.

Reading aloud in clubs and at home was commonplace, demonstrating how reading could take the form of a communal activity, where one person read aloud to others. Even then there could be tension between what an individual wanted to read, and what was thought suitable, particularly by their elders. Reading aloud is particularly elusive in the primary sources, apart from on a Sunday which was mentioned in several accounts. Such reading aloud is an example of an interaction between different cultures, in this case oral culture and written culture. This raises the wider question of how reading interacted with existing social activities. Here there were more questions left unanswered than answered. Occasionally there are glimpses of answers, including Baxter's use of the coffee room, or the young Paisley boy's memory of going to a reading group with his father. Neither would be isolated instances. Both references are useful for their indication of the interaction between reading and other social activities, but such references are too few and far between to draw more than tentative conclusions. This is particularly disappointing given the time period: an era when given the Enlightenment background and burgeoning industrial revolution it might be thought that learning and related activities such as reading would be more actively encouraged. This has the further complication of making it difficult to contextualise the readers for whom evidence can be found properly. Much of the evidence found probably concerned more enthusiastic readers who would have been more willing to go out of their way to fit reading around otherwise busy lives. It is likely that many other readers would have had less time for the activity, if any at all. But how big was the gap between the two groups? Frustratingly this is another unanswered question.

Differences in reading habits between people from different social classes, different localities and genders are also not as clear as much as might be desired, to a large extent a reflection of the surviving evidence. It is possible to speculate about some of the potential differences, including for example the likelihood that a professional man might have been

more readily accepted as spending much of his time reading than a labouring man would. But this must remain as speculation until definitive evidence is found.

Nonetheless the evidence provides valuable new insights into how Scottish reading habits had developed by the end of this period, and how individual readers fitted reading into their lives. Significantly, we can conclude that reading was a widespread and important activity, one that people in Scotland would go out of their way to participate in. An informative number of readers from throughout the period throughout Scotland, and from all sectors of society, provide a vivid picture of reading habits, and it is remarkable how the same patterns recur. This is reminiscent of informal lending of books between friends, an aspect of reading opportunities discussed in Chapter 2 and shown to extend throughout society, not exclusive to one class or another. Likewise, whatever their background, people tended to describe in similar ways how they started to read, and how they fitted the activity into their lives. Given the methodological need to identify recurring patterns and trends among readers, this was reassuring for reaching broader conclusions, but also worth noting as a result in itself.

Chapter 4: What people were reading

This chapter is the first of a pair investigating what people were reading during this period in Scotland. This aspect of reading habits has not been studied as fully before, with historians such as Crawford and Houston providing only partial glimpses.²⁵⁷ This chapter establishes the general picture, to uncover recurring patterns of reading habits and change over time. The next chapter then builds on this picture to set what people were reading in broader chronological and international contexts, and to investigate their different motivations. The focus of this chapter is on evidence from the perspective of readers, both individuals who kept detailed records of their reading, and readers studied collectively through records such as library borrowings. However, it is equally important to consider what was available in the market since that inevitably influenced choices for readers. Thus the first part of this chapter reviews general market trends, before considering how closely this compared with what readers read, both individually and in groups. St Clair's pioneering study of publishing trends is drawn upon, together with evidence for what different booksellers were selling and what could be borrowed from libraries active at the time.²⁵⁸ The emphasis is not so much on the traditionally regarded literary classics as viewed by modern literary historians, but rather on what appealed most to the reading public according to the surviving evidence, in specific titles that recur time and again, and broader genres of reading material, particularly books.

Trends in publishing

Trends in Scottish publishing at this time have not been thoroughly documented before.²⁵⁹

However it is likely that there would have been much in common with the wider British

²⁵⁷ Crawford, for example, summarised the stock of various libraries—Crawford, 'Reading and book use in 18th-century Scotland', pp. 35 and 38. Houston analysed the borrowings at Innerpefferay between 1747 and 1757—Houston, *Scottish Literacy and the Scottish Identity*, p. 174–177.

²⁵⁸ W. St Clair, *The reading nation in the romantic period* (Cambridge, 2004).

²⁵⁹ The upcoming *Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland* four-volume series to be published by Edinburgh University Press should dramatically improve the situation.

trade, due to both shared influences and the importance to both British and Scottish publishing of the publishing centres of Edinburgh and London.²⁶⁰ Broadly speaking, this was an era of both great growth and increasingly local diversity in the print trade, with both increasing dissemination of specific titles and subjects, and a growing number of local publishers catering for increasing local markets.²⁶¹ Much of the publishing was founded on reprints, particularly those known as the Old Canon—the body of literature including works by writers such as Shakespeare, Pope and Dryden.²⁶² Such works were available in a variety of prices and editions, copyright-free, and were published en-masse, particularly by Scottish printers.²⁶³ Increasingly, newer authors such as Fielding were reprinted in the same way, and matters came to a head in the 1770s with a series of copyright trials where people who held the copyright tried to prevent other editions being produced in this way.²⁶⁴ The outcome of these trials was a temporary relaxation of copyright rules, which firmly established the Old Canon and led to a number of publishers' series reprinting the most popular poets and other writers from the past, making such titles readily available on the market.²⁶⁵

Several genres emerged during this period, particularly the novel, a genre established earlier in the century by writers such as Defoe, Richardson and Fielding.²⁶⁶ By the late 18th century the novel was in the ascendant—even if it was regarded by many commentators as an inferior form of literature with a potent capacity to corrupt its readers,

²⁶⁰ Trends in British publishing during this period are better documented—see for example Feather, *A History of British Publishing* as well as the already mentioned St Clair, *Reading nation*.

²⁶¹ This is apparent by studying the titles published throughout Scotland in this period, for example those listed in the *Eighteenth Century Short Title Catalogue*.

²⁶² For perhaps the most detailed account of this phenomenon see St Clair, *Reading nation*, pp. 122–139.

²⁶³ For an indication of the extent to which Scottish books published in this way reached even as far as southern England see St Clair, *Reading nation*, pp. 106–107.

²⁶⁴ For a chronological summary of the changing copyright situation during the 18th and 19th centuries see St Clair, *Reading nation*, pp. 54–55.

²⁶⁵ St Clair, for example, uses an 1810 advertisement from publisher Cooke to illustrate the range of Old Canon texts reprinted in this way—St Clair, *Reading nation*, p. 129.

²⁶⁶ See for example I. Watt, *The Rise of the Novel* (London, 2000).

particularly susceptible young women.²⁶⁷ Despite such negative publicity, the novel was well-established by the end of the period, and new publications thereafter included the popular works of Austen and Scott. By contrast, poetry had persisted throughout the period, partly due to the wide availability of the Old Canon works, and expanded at the end of the period with new popular poets such as Burns, Scott, Byron and Wordsworth.

Subjects that flourished in number during the 18th century were particularly history, and voyages and travels. History books, in particular, changed from books generally listing dates and events, to the narrative and analysis used by historians such as Gibbon and Hume.²⁶⁸ Voyages and travels books covered the explorations of travellers such as Cook and Park, where accounts of their voyages were published soon after their return. Perhaps the growth in popularity of both subjects is that they tied into contemporary events, allowing their readers to understand what was happening around the world in an era of great political upheaval and exploration.

Of the older subjects, religion, whose books had been the most commonly printed at the start of the period, were still being printed en masse at the end. There was even growth of religious publishing—Glasgow, for example, which became an important publishing centre for religious imprints in the early 19th century, churning out religious tracts, periodicals, and other titles to cater for an eager audience.²⁶⁹ Another form of religious books that grew during the period were moral tracts such as Hannah More's, often aimed at children.²⁷⁰ Educational books persisted throughout the 18th and early 19th century, particularly those aimed at school children, and such books produced in Edinburgh and elsewhere, provided textbooks for scholars across Scotland. Similarly the Foulis editions

²⁶⁷ J. Pearson, *Women's reading in Britain 1750–1835: a dangerous recreation* (Cambridge, 1999); and St Clair, *Reading nation*, pp. 280–283.

²⁶⁸ K. O'Brien, 'The history market in eighteenth-century England', in I. Rivers (ed), *Books and their readers in eighteenth-century England: new essays* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 105–133.

²⁶⁹ The sheer volume of religious books published in Glasgow during this period is apparent by studying the *English Short Title Catalogue* (<http://estc.bl.uk>).

²⁷⁰ Such works included the much-circulated *Cheap Repository Tracts* published between 1795 and 1797.

of the classics, published in Glasgow, became famous throughout Europe for their high quality.²⁷¹

One category of Scottish reading material largely invisible in the historical record is the chapbook, an important feature of Scottish reading habits at this time, but very ephemeral and hard to properly contextualise now. Cowan and Paterson discuss many surviving examples of this genre.²⁷² However this chapter focuses on the more readily visible aspects of the Scottish print trade at this time, and in particular books.

Thinking in terms of the REI classification of religious, entertainment and improvement reading, there was a dramatic growth on the market of entertainment and improvement publications during the period. Religious publications may also have grown in number, bearing in mind the output of the Glasgow publishers, but to a smaller extent, leading to a relative decline in their presence on the market.

Booksellers and their stock

The diversity of subjects is reflected in the books available from booksellers, both those concentrated in Edinburgh and the increasing numbers found across provincial Scotland. There are a number of ways of investigating books for sale. Advertisements in newspapers are difficult practically to search, and tend to focus on new titles. Few auction catalogues are available for booksellers outside Edinburgh, and many were for booksellers whose businesses had failed, and so may not be the best reflection of books appealing to the buying public. A different approach is to examine books listed in after-death inventories of stock and possessions, in other words books stocked by businesses which were still active and interrupted only by the death of the relevant booksellers.²⁷³ Although only a relatively

²⁷¹ For a history of the firm see D. Murray, *Robert & Andrew Foulis and the Glasgow Press, with some account of the Glasgow Academy of the Fine Arts* (Glasgow, 1913).

²⁷² Cowan and Paterson, *Folk in print*.

²⁷³ Such after-death inventories have been under-utilised by Scottish historians in general. For further discussion of inventories as historical evidence see F.J. Shaw, *The Northern*

small number of booksellers and their stock were found they include a number of the more important provincial booksellers. Moreover, after-death inventories have more complete lists of stock than newspaper advertisements, and often list the quantities of each title held allowing a tentative assessment of the most popular titles and subjects. Comparing the stock of four provincial booksellers in terms of quantity and variety of books held gives a general impression of growth and increasing diversity of subject matter:

Table 4: Booksellers with stock detailed in after-death inventories

<u>Bookseller</u>	<u>Died</u>	<u>Number of copies</u>	<u>Subjects represented</u>
David Haigie in Kirkcaldy	1760	about 1500 ²⁷⁴	religion and school books
James Notman in Selkirk	1772	about 650	religion
Ebenezer Wilson in Dumfries	1788	about 3000	religion, history and biography, poetry, classics, novels, grammar and spelling, school books, mathematics and plays
John Dallachy in Peterhead	1803	about 500	religion, school books, novels, voyages and travels, history and biography

Sources: NAS, CC20/6/42, 1765 January 26; NAS, CC8/8/122, 1773 March 19; NAS, CC5/6/17, 1790 February 16; and NAS, CC1/6/67, 1804 May 15.

The size of the bookshops varied from small shops to the much larger ones of Haigie and Wilson. Each would have reflected local reading interests to an extent, but taken together they illustrate the changing subject matter of books available in bookshops across Scotland. The earliest two booksellers above, Haigie and Notman in the 1760s and 1770s, stocked mostly religious books, accounting for respectively 60% and 78% of their stock. The rest was almost exclusively improvement books, with entertainment works either not present at all, or present only in extremely small numbers. By contrast, the later booksellers, Wilson and Dallachy, sold a broader mix of subjects, and in terms of the REI classification system half of their stock was improvement publications, over a quarter

and Western Isles of Scotland and their Economy in the seventeenth century (Edinburgh, 1980), pp. 9–12 and B. Inglis, ‘Scottish testamentary inventories: a neglected source for the study of Scottish agriculture—illustrated by the case of Dunblane, 1660–1740’, *Scottish Archives*, Vol. 10 (2004), especially pp. 57–58. Also relevant is H. Anderson, ‘ScottishDocuments.com—Testaments online’, *Scottish Archives*, Vol. 9 (2003), pp. 10–15 describing the recent digitisation of these records.

²⁷⁴ Much of Haigie’s stock is school books held in bulk, for example 16 dozen Latin school books at 8 shillings per dozen and another 5 dozen at 5 shillings per dozen.

religious works, and the rest entertainment books which were so notable by their absence in the earlier stock-lists. Overall, as with the market in general, the picture from studying these booksellers and what they sold is one of dramatic growth of improvement publications, a more modest growth of entertainment works, and a striking reduction in the presence of religious texts.

Frustratingly, it is difficult to find out more information about these booksellers to put their bookselling into better context. Even Ebenezer Wilson, whose after-death inventory has the most detailed listing of books found, remains elusive. Wilson traded as a bookseller in Dumfries from at least 1756 until his death in 1788, in other words he was a long-established and probably successful local bookseller.²⁷⁵ His stock and the longevity of his business suggests that his was a relatively large-scale provincial bookshop, and the books stocked probably accurately reflect the tastes of local readers in and around Dumfries in the late 18th century.²⁷⁶ 260 different titles represented a total of 3076 books for sale, as in Table 5. Religion accounted for only a quarter of the titles, and there was a strong presence of history, poetry, classics and novels.

Table 5: Top subjects stocked in Ebenezer Wilson's bookshop in 1788²⁷⁷

<u>Subject</u>	<u>% of titles stocked</u>
religion	27.4
history and biography	10.2
poetry	9.8
classics	7.4
novels	7.4
grammar and spelling	5.1
miscellaneous	5.9
education	3.7
mathematics	3.3
plays	2.8

Source: Derived from NAS, CC5/6/17, 1790 February 16.

²⁷⁵ No advertisements for his bookshop can be found in the

²⁷⁶ The Scottish Book Trade Index (<http://www.nls.uk/catalogues/resources/sbti/>) indicates that Wilson was trading as a bookseller in Dumfries from 1756 until his death in 1788, in other words he was a long-established and probably successful local bookseller.

²⁷⁷ This is based on 235 separate titles (after combining multiple editions/listings) of which 215 could be categorised giving the percentages above.

Because Wilson's stock list records the number of copies held of each title, it is possible to speculate tentatively about the bestsellers, assuming that the books he had most copies of were the more popular texts, and not unwanted unsold copies. For such a long-running and probably successful bookshop, this seems a reasonable assumption to make, for the quantities involved are so great, that it seems unlikely Wilson would have kept them if they were not going to sell.

**Table 6: Top titles in Ebenezer Wilson's bookshop in 1788
based on numbers of copies stocked**

<u>Title</u>	<u>Copies held</u>
Aesop's fables	234
Dunlop's Greek Grammar	220
Gregory's legacy	186
Craighead on the Sacrament	82
Telfair's Spelling Book	78
Watts Psalms	76
the French Convert	54
Oeconomy of Love	52
Scott's Spelling Book	52
Caesar	50
Thomson's Seasons	50

Source: Derived from NAS, CC5/6/17, 1790 February 16.

Stocking large numbers of books suitable for schoolchildren is unsurprising, and likewise relevant religious and poetry texts.²⁷⁸ Most items were held in much smaller quantities with fewer than 10 copies held for over half of the titles in the list. Some were also available in differently priced editions: for example 30 copies of a twopence small edition of *Robinson Crusoe* stocked alongside 6 copies of an eightpence edition with plates, implying that Wilson had a much greater number of poorer customers. Two-thirds of the items were valued at a shilling or less and a fifth at threepence or under.²⁷⁹ At the other extreme, 10 items were priced at 8 shillings or more, all multi-volume items presumably targeted at the wealthier customers—for example a 14-volume edition of *Theatre* (14

²⁷⁸ Local physician John Armstrong's sex manual *Oeconomy of Love* stands out and was according to the DNB a bestseller in its day. 46 of Wilson's copies were priced at twopence; another six at a penny each. Among the known local book owners David Blair of Bellenmont late Provost of Dumfries (d. 1793) had a copy of Armstrong's poetical *Miscellanies* but *Oeconomy of Love* was excluded from this collection.

²⁷⁹ Such lower-cost items including pamphlets may have been less likely to be recorded in subsequent after-death inventories than more valuable books.

shillings), 10-volume edition of Rousseau's *Works* (10 shillings), and a 13-volume edition of Swift's *Works* (12 shillings). Wilson's stock was diverse, and his customers probably likewise.

Library catalogues: the Angus examples

Books for sale are not necessarily the best guide to what people were actually reading. An alternative source are library registers—both the books they stocked and what people were borrowing.²⁸⁰ Obviously there was local variation between individual libraries but, broadly speaking, different types of libraries tended to stock the same books. Circulating libraries run by booksellers became particularly strongly associated with novels, although the proportion of novels stocked could vary widely and was not always as overwhelming as might be expected.²⁸¹ Nicoll's New Circulating Library in Dundee, for example, contained relatively few novels in 1782, about a fifth of the total. Indeed the title page of its catalogue stressed the many other subjects the library catered for:

A
CATALOGUE
OF THE NEW
CIRCULATING LIBRARY
Containing a great variety of
HISTORY, VOYAGES, TRAVELS, LIVES,
ARTS and SCIENCES, NATURAL HISTORY,
PHILOSOPHY, AGRICULTURE, ECCLESIASTICAL
HISTORY, POETRY, PLAYS, MISCELLANEOUS
LITERATURE, NOVELS, &c.²⁸²

²⁸⁰ The local library catalogues examined in this and the following paragraph were located in my work as a research assistant on a Leverhulme Trust funded pilot project entitled 'The Late Enlightenment Scottish Burgh' (F/00143-F). However they were not analysed during that project and the analysis here is new for this thesis.

²⁸¹ Jacobs, 'Eighteenth-century British circulating libraries and cultural book history', p. 19 reviewed circulating library catalogues and found that fiction accounted for 20% of stock of larger ones (average holdings of about 5000 titles) and 70% of stock of smaller ones (average holdings of 430 titles).

²⁸² R. Nicoll, *A Catalogue of the New Circulating Library* (Dundee, 1782), held at Dundee Central Library, Lamb Collection, Box 6(7).

Four decades later, John Hamilton had a similarly sized circulating library in Dundee but by then over half of his stock was novels: page after page of the duodecimo section of his catalogue lists little else.²⁸³

By contrast, subscription libraries were less likely to stock novels and more likely to stock informative or improving tomes, scientific books or works by Enlightenment scholars.²⁸⁴ This general impression is supported by the earliest catalogues of the Forfar and Dundee subscription libraries, institutions founded in 1795 and 1796 respectively.²⁸⁵ Categorising the volumes by subject reveals the relative weighting of subjects stocked by the two libraries in their early years: broadly similar, with slight differences in the relative proportions.

²⁸³ J. Hamilton, *Catalogue of the Circulating Library of John Hamilton, High Street, Dundee* (Dundee, 1826), held at Dundee Central Library, Lamb Collection, Box 6(4).

²⁸⁴ For a more detailed discussion of the role of Enlightenment texts in such libraries' stock see M. Towsey, 'All Partners may be Enlightened and Improved by Reading them: The Distribution of Enlightenment Books in the Scottish Subscription Library Catalogues, 1750–c.1820', *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies*, Vol. 28 (2008), pp. 20–43.

²⁸⁵ *Regulations and catalogue of books belonging to the Forfar Library. 1st May 1795* (Dundee, 1795), shelved in Local History collection at Forfar Library; and *Regulations and Catalogue of the Dundee Public Library* (Dundee, 1803), held at Dundee Central Library, Lamb Collection, Box 8(12).

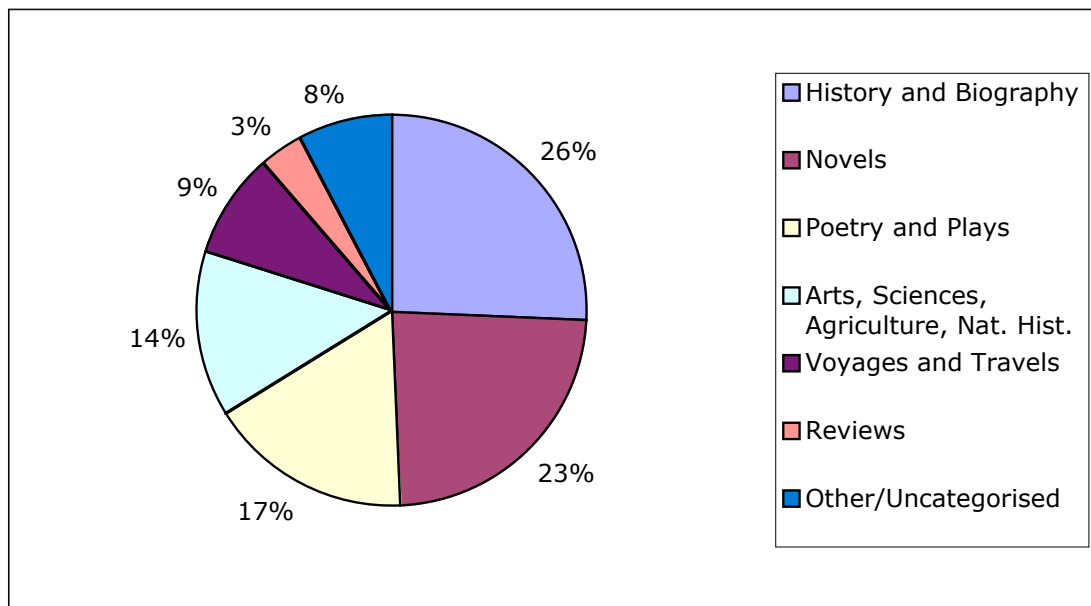


Figure 4: Subjects of volumes in Forfar Library, 1795

REI: religion 0%, entertainment 44%, improvement 56%

Source: *Regulations and catalogue of books belonging to the Forfar Library. 1st May 1795* (Dundee, 1795), shelved in Local History collection at Forfar Library.

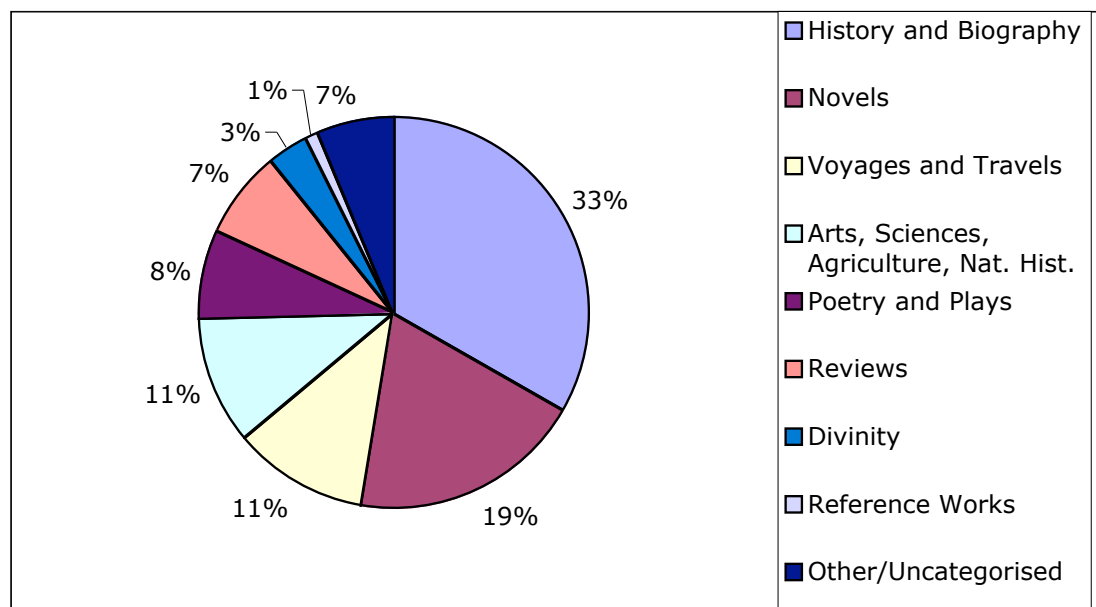


Figure 5: Subjects of volumes in Dundee Public Library, 1803

REI: religion 4%, entertainment 29%, improvement 67%

Source: *Regulations and Catalogue of the Dundee Public Library* (Dundee, 1803), held at Dundee Central Library, Lamb Collection, Box 8(12).

Both libraries had significant stocks of the popular new genre of novels, contributing to entertainment publications accounting for 44% of the library stock at Forfar, and 29% at Dundee. Improvement books were the most popular at both libraries: 56% of the Forfar stock, and 67% of Dundee's. Moreover, Forfar library also held a range of scientific instruments for the use of its subscribers, further emphasizing its scientific and educational credentials.²⁸⁶ Religious books, the third category of the REI subject classification, were not popular at either library, not present at all, as at Forfar, or only in tiny numbers, as at Dundee with just 4%.

Another local subscription library leaving an early catalogue is the Arbroath Subscription Library. Like Forfar's, this was a private subscription library with a smaller and more restricted membership than Dundee's: closer in kind to a book club, but operating on a large enough scale to need a dedicated room to hold the books and a librarian to manage them.²⁸⁷ Arbroath's earliest catalogue is a manuscript volume recording books added in chronological order, providing a valuable insight into the acquisitions of a library of this kind, far fuller than usually recorded in committee minutes alone.²⁸⁸ At the start, the library was acquiring over 100 titles a year, some bought, some gifted by members. In this way it rapidly increased its stock with subjects as diverse as history and biography, novels, voyages and travels, reviews, poetry and plays, and reference works. In later years, the rate of acquisitions eased slightly, and new publishing trends can be followed through the changing stock. For example, Scott's *Waverley* novels were bought from 1815 onwards, and the influential *Edinburgh Review* first bought in 1803. Indeed, review magazines seem to have been particularly popular with the Arbroath library members if their rate of acquisition is any guide, for Blackwood's *Edinburgh Magazine*, the *Monthly Magazine*, the *Monthly Review*, the *Quarterly Review*, and the *Critical Review* were all bought regularly.

²⁸⁶ This tradition was continued in later years with the addition of an 'Electrical Machine'.

²⁸⁷ Indeed much of the early minutes are concerned with finding a room for the library—Angus Archives, MS451/1/1, Arbroath Subscription Library Minutes, 1797–1832.

²⁸⁸ Angus Archives, MS451/2/1, Arbroath Subscription Library Catalogue, 1797–1844.

Such local examples can be reassuringly viewed as illustrative of wider trends, as demonstrated by Kaufman in his survey of surviving library records across Scotland, in particular library catalogues.²⁸⁹ Kaufman observed that the books stocked by Scottish circulating and subscription libraries were often similar to those found in similar English institutions at the same time, with only a modest preference for Scottish material in the Scottish libraries.²⁹⁰ For example, citing the Dundee example of Nicoll as well as others, Kaufman argued that circulating libraries at that time in Scotland, like their counterparts in England, typically stocked about 20% novels and 80% ‘standard nonfiction’, which would equate to the improvement REI category used in this thesis. Such Scottish libraries, therefore, reflect a broader British pattern of reading choices.

Clearly, each library aimed to appeal to its readers, but it is likely that the subscription libraries, particularly the public-oriented ones like Dundee’s, were more actively trying to shape the reading patterns of their readers, encouraging them to read worthy and informative tomes and thus learn more about the world they lived in. By contrast, circulating libraries run as purely commercial ventures needed to carry books that would appeal to the customers coming through the door. Indeed, it is unlikely that circulating libraries could run for long periods successfully if they did not cater sufficiently to local demands, particularly in the face of local competition. On the basis of this, circulating libraries and their stock might appear to be the better guide to what people were wanting to read, but they were rarer than in England. Instead subscription libraries were found more widely in Scotland.

Evidence from library borrowings

Another way of investigating books read from a library perspective is to look at borrowings. This is particularly important because the popularity of certain titles may not always be apparent from library catalogues. Borrowing records also cover a large number

²⁸⁹ Kaufman, ‘The Rise of Community Libraries in Scotland’.

²⁹⁰ Kaufman, ‘The Rise of Community Libraries in Scotland’, p. 276.

of readers at a time, providing a snapshot view of broad trends. Unfortunately, as noted in Chapter 1, there are no borrowing records from a Scottish circulating library at this time that can be usefully analysed: indeed there are few surviving borrowing records at all.²⁹¹ Fortunately, the Gray Library borrowing records exist. Since they are those of a free public library open to all residents of the town of Haddington they are useful as a guide to the reading preferences of that town's inhabitants.²⁹² The surviving borrowing records cover 1732–1816, thus spanning the period of this thesis, and between them representing the borrowings of over 700 different people, from all sectors of society.²⁹³ Although little information about the readers is generally recorded in the borrowing register, the concentrated urban context together with scattered information recorded about the readers allows the detailed identities of over a third of them to be determined, putting their borrowings into a fuller context.²⁹⁴

A common misconception about Gray Library is that religious books dominated the borrowings through to the mid 19th century.²⁹⁵ This is supposedly a legacy of the library being founded by a local parish minister, based upon his private collection of religious books.²⁹⁶ Many of these books were old, indeed a fifth of the entire stock in 1828 dated

²⁹¹ This is ruling out the Chambers Circulating Library ledger for 1828 (NLS MS Dep. 341/413) which although it survives and records details of customers cannot be readily analysed borrowing-wise because of the cryptic abbreviations used for titles.

²⁹² The lending registers for 1732–1796 and 1803–1816 are part of the Gray Library records in the NLS MS 16446–16482. For this research the borrowings (NLS MS 16480–16481) were entered into a relational database with linked tables for borrowings, book details, and borrower information. See Appendix 1 for more information about this process.

²⁹³ At the start Gray Library's borrowers were largely professionals. As time moved on increasing numbers of artisans, manufacturers, merchants and others used the library.

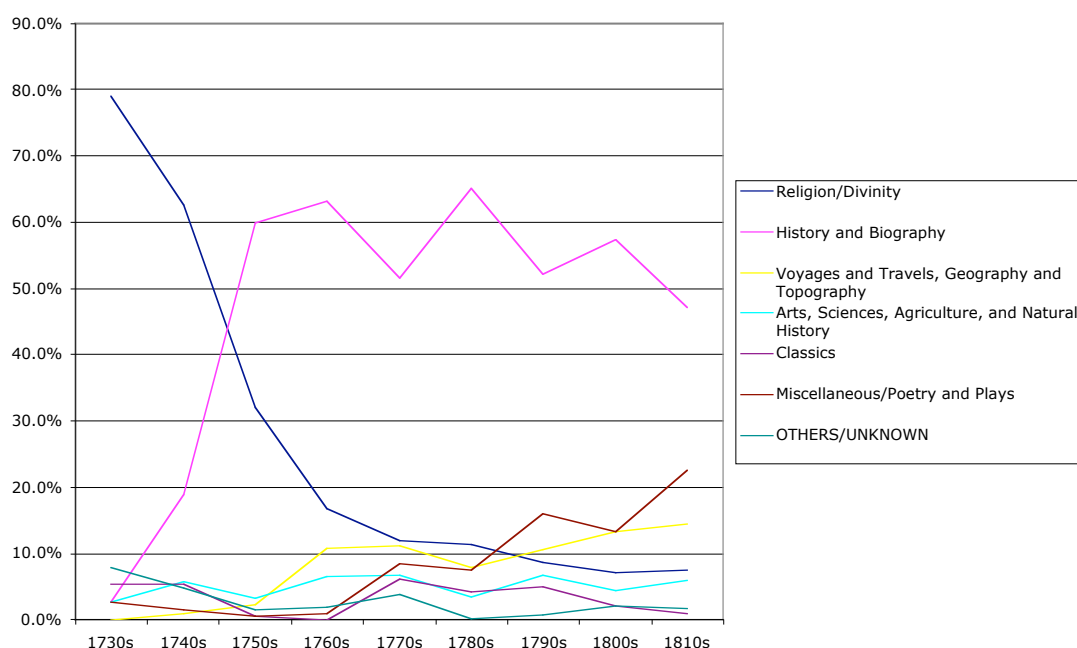
²⁹⁴ By gathering scattered references and using other local records it has been possible to establish additional biographical information for a third of Gray Library's borrowers, including typically their occupation, family background, birth date, and what happened to them later. Other local records used include parish registers (Church of Scotland and non-conformist), late 18th-century tax records (particularly shop tax, inhabited house tax, window tax, and consolidated tax) and council minutes in the NAS, local directories, wills and census returns. Significant extra information for 242 Gray Library borrowers has been traced in this way.

²⁹⁵ For example W.F. Gray, *A short history of Haddington* (Dunbar, 1944), p. 138, and *Haddington Royal Burgh: A History and a Guide* (East Linton, 1997), p. 36.

²⁹⁶ Gray Library was founded after Mr John Gray (1646–1717), former minister of Aberlady parish in East Lothian, bequeathed his private collection of books to his home town.

from the sixteenth century, one title even from 1497. The library also held Mr Gray's extensive collection of pamphlets, mostly religious.²⁹⁷ Such titles appealed particularly to religious scholars, both trainee and qualified ministers, and it is clear that religious books were the most frequently borrowed in the early years, accounting for 79% of all borrowings in the 1730s. By the 1740s, the proportion of religious books borrowed was dropping however, and by the 1750s, history and biography books were the most frequently borrowed and remained so over the following decades.

²⁹⁷ *Catalogue of the books in the town of Haddington's library. MDCCCXXVIII* (Haddington, 1828).



Graph 1: Borrowings by subject at Gray Library, 1732–1816²⁹⁸

Source: Gray Library borrowings database (see Appendices 1 and 2) derived from Gray Library borrowing registers 1732–1816, NLS MS 16480–16481.

Grouping the subjects together even further using the REI classification system reveals that in the 1730s 86% of the Gray Library borrowings were religious versus just 11% improvement works. By the 1810s that situation had reversed, and the equivalent percentages were now 8% religion and 75% improvement. Entertainment borrowing also saw a growth during this period, from 3% in the 1750s to approximately 18% by the 1810s, even though this library stocked an unusually small number of novels.

The key change over in subjects borrowed circa 1750 was the consequence of a more diverse mix of borrowers combined with changing library holdings. Ministers still used

²⁹⁸ The subject categories here are based on those used by William Lyon Mackenzie (1795–1861) to categorise his reading between 1806 and 1820 before he emigrated from Dundee to Canada—Lindsey, *The Life and Times of William Lyon Mackenzie*, Vol. II, pp. 303–313. There is no standard category scheme used by researchers of reading and Mackenzie's categories were chosen because they fit well with the Gray Library holdings. Some books could fit under multiple categories but particular care was taken with these e.g. books about other countries (travel-focused ones under Travels and Voyages; more dedicated histories under History), early church histories (under Religion/Divinity), science/practical books (under Arts, Sciences etc.) and varied collections such as Fielding's (under Miscellaneous).

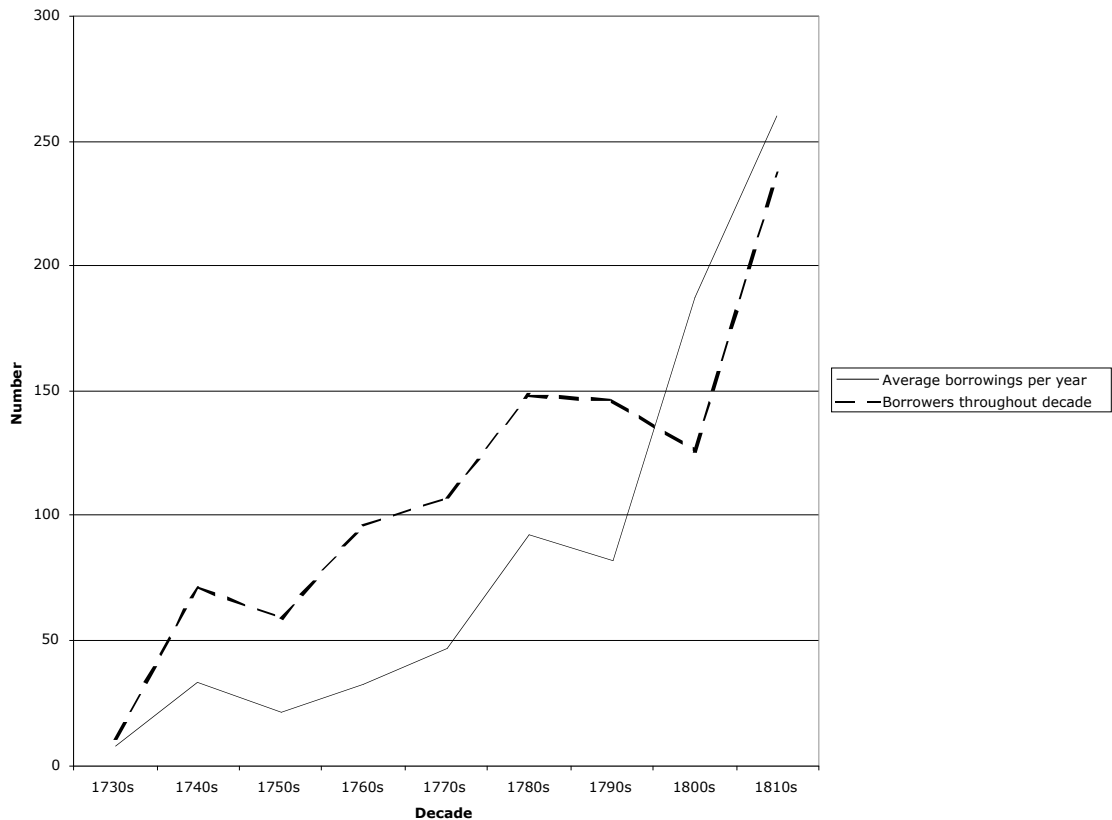
the library, but local professionals and merchants increasingly appeared as borrowers. In the earliest years such borrowers often borrowed religious books: for example in the 1740s and 1750s Andrew Dickson (merchant), Dr James Lundie (surgeon) and John Martine (tanner and postmaster) borrowed mainly published sermons and annotations of the Bible.²⁹⁹ By the 1760s, similar borrowers were favouring other subjects such as history and biography, particularly as new books were bought for the library. From 1750, the library's trustees regularly drew up lists of recommended titles to order from the booksellers.³⁰⁰ The books chosen were similar to many of those ordered by the committees of more restricted subscription libraries: histories, biographies, travels, poems, educational books and religious books. Fiction however was largely absent, though poems were frequently bought; and the library—unlike contemporary subscription libraries—did not buy any periodicals, not even reviews.³⁰¹ Between 1750 and 1810, over ninety new titles were bought, often borrowed heavily after they came in. In addition, the library sometimes received gifts of books. At the same time, books were sometimes lost, or borrowed but never returned. Each year, the trustees inspected the books, and this, together with re-cataloguing, helped to identify missing volumes to be recalled or replaced.³⁰² This task became increasingly important as the volume of borrowings and borrowers increased throughout the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century.

²⁹⁹ As provosts it is easier to identify these borrowers because their signatures are frequently recorded in the Haddington council minutes (NAS B30/13) and can be compared with signatures in the Gray Library borrowing registers.

³⁰⁰ NLS, MS 16479, 1750 February 28. The committee of trustees was drawn from the town's officials: the Provost, the Bailies, the Dean of Guild, and the Town Clerk.

³⁰¹ For example Arbroath Private Subscription Library in 1809 was buying the *Monthly Review*, *Monthly Magazine*, *Critical Review*, and *Edinburgh Review*—Angus Archives, Forfar, MS 451/2/1, Arbroath Subscription Library Catalogue, 1797–1844.

³⁰² After one such examination the trustees found that overdue volumes were being held by the Sheriff-Clerk, a parish minister, the daughter of a late Bailie, and a local merchant—NLS, MS 16479, 1782 October 5.



Graph 2: Decade-by-decade numbers of borrowings and borrowers at Gray Library, 1732–1816³⁰³

Source: Gray Library borrowings database (see Appendices 1 and 2) derived from Gray Library borrowing registers 1732–1816, NLS MS 16480–16481.

Charting the most frequently borrowed books throughout the different decades reveals the changing borrowing choices of the library's borrowers:

³⁰³ The number of borrowings per year has been charted instead of total borrowings per decade to cope with gaps in the borrowing register and it ending in 1816. These gaps (covering most of 1796–1804) probably explain the apparent slight dip in borrowings in the 1790s since that decade's later years are missing. The number of borrowers charted is the number of different ones per decade.

1740s

Rollin's Ancient History
 Greenhill on Ezekiel
 Poli Synopsis Criticorum
 Rapin's History of England
 Universal History (Ancient)
 Poole's Annotations on the Bible
 Buchanan's History of Scotland
 Rollin's Roman History
 Andilly's Josephus's Works
 (equal) Davila's History of the Wars of
 France; Wodrow's History of the
 Church of Scotland; and Erasmi
 Paraphrases in Novum Testamentum

1780s

Sully's Memoirs
 Rollin's Roman History
 Universal History (Ancient)
 Universal History (Modern)
 Raynal's History of the East and West
 Indies
 Robertson's History of Charles V
 Rollin's Ancient History
 Wraxall's Memoirs of the Kings of
 France of the Race of Valois
 Fielding's Works
 Wraxall's Tour through some of the
 Northern parts of Europe

1760s

Universal History (Modern)
 Universal History (Ancient)
 Rollin's Roman History
 Rollin's Ancient History
 Anson's Voyages Round the World
 Callander's Collection of Voyages
 History and Proceedings of the House of
 Commons
 Nature Delineated or Philosophical
 Conversations (trans. from French)
 (equal) Rapin's Tindal's continuation;
 Ludlow's Memoirs of the Civil Wars
 in the reign of Charles I; and Rollin's
 Belles Lettres

1800s

Rollin's Ancient History
 Forsyth's Beauties of Scotland
 Gibbon's Decline and Fall of Roman
 Empire
 Fielding's Works
 Rollin's Roman History
 Hume's History of England
 Russel's History of Modern Europe
 Henry's History of Great Britain
 Burns's Works
 Cook's Voyages

Figure 6: Most frequently borrowed books at Gray Library, decade by decade

Source: Gray Library borrowings database (see Appendices 1 and 2) derived from Gray Library borrowing registers 1732–1816, NLS MS 16480–16481.

Considering the popular books at Gray Library in terms of the REI classification reveals that the 1740s saw a mix of religious and improvement titles comprising the heavily borrowed books. By the 1760s and 1780s the balance had switched to almost 100% improvement, a state which continued through to the 1800s, when a small number of entertainment titles—the works of Fielding and Burns—also proved very popular, comprising a fifth of the most popularly borrowed titles.

History works were particularly popular at Gray Library. The *Universal History* multi-volume works were bought early on and remained popular for several decades, as were the

histories of Rollin.³⁰⁴ Later narrative histories proved popular too, though often bought decades after first publication. These included the Enlightenment histories of Robertson (bought by the library between 1762 and 1804), Hume's history of England (bought 1804), Henry's history of Great Britain (bought 1804), and Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (bought 1806). The delayed purchase of these popular titles is curious, suggesting relatively late reading in this community of these key Enlightenment texts and also that the people were not accessing them by other means, for example via Edinburgh.³⁰⁵ By contrast, books of voyages and travels were bought soon after publication and borrowed heavily, particularly Anson's (bought 1753), Callander's (bought 1768), and Cook's (bought 1776). Closer to home, Robert Forsyth's multi-volume *Beauties of Scotland: containing an Account of the Agriculture, Commerce, Mines, Manufactures, Population, &c. of each County* (bought from 1804 onwards) was extremely popular, borrowed twice as often as any other book in the 1810s, probably due to the combination of local subject matter and Enlightenment interest in practical knowledge. As well as factual books, the library acquired a number of fictional and imaginative works in the later eighteenth century, though still in small numbers if compared with circulating libraries.³⁰⁶ One such acquisition, borrowed heavily for many decades, was Fielding's *Works* (bought 1776). This trend continued with the poems of Burns (bought 1804), Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (bought 1808), and *Ossian's Poems* (gifted anonymously in 1810), Scottish works that were popular with the borrowers. Fiction and poetry were particularly favoured by Haddington's female borrowers whereas male borrowers were more likely to borrow history or travel. Indeed, among female borrowers the most popular titles at Gray Library were 50% entertainment ones and 50% improvement, compared with nearly 100% improvement works for males.

³⁰⁴ O'Brien, 'The history market in eighteenth-century England' describes the publication of these and other history titles.

³⁰⁵ Some of the Gray Library borrowers could have accessed circulating or other fee-paying libraries in Edinburgh, or may have been able to afford to buy desirable books.

³⁰⁶ Jacobs, 'Eighteenth-century British circulating libraries and cultural book history', p. 19 reviewed circulating library catalogues and found that fiction accounted for 20% of stock of larger ones (average holdings of about 5000 titles) and 70% of stock of smaller ones (average holdings of 430 titles).

Male borrowers

Rollin's Ancient History
 Rollin's Roman History
 Fielding's Works
 Forsyth's Beauties of Scotland
 Universal History (Ancient)
 Universal History (Modern)
 Cook's Voyages to Pacific Ocean
 Robertson's History of Charles V
 Callander's Collection of Voyages
 Sully's Memoirs

Female borrowers

Fielding's Works
 Johnson's Works
 Scott's Minstrelsy of Scottish Border
 Henry's History of Great Britain
 Pope's Works
 Burns's Works
 Ossian's Poems
 Rollin's Roman History
 (equal) Forsyth's Beauties of Scotland;
 Robertson's History of America;
 Rollin's Ancient History

**Figure 7: Comparing popular books at Gray Library,
 male versus female borrowers³⁰⁷**

Source: Gray Library borrowings database (see Appendices 1 and 2) derived from Gray Library borrowing registers 1732–1816, NLS MS 16480–16481.

The difference between male and female borrowings is striking, and fits with conventional stereotypes of the time about female readers and their preference for reading so-called corrupting novels, even if Gray Library's stock of fiction was low.³⁰⁸ However, the titles most borrowed by both genders represented a remarkably small proportion of the stock: indeed just twenty core titles accounted for half of all borrowings.³⁰⁹

Comparing the Gray Library borrowings to Kaufman's study of the surviving Bristol Library borrowings for 1773–1784, shows a largely similar pattern, with a strong preference in both libraries for borrowing history books and voyages and travels.³¹⁰ Later, a Scottish title was particularly popular at Gray library: Forsyth's *Beauties of Scotland*.

³⁰⁷ This breakdown is based on 584 individual male borrowers and 73 female borrowers at Gray Library. Another 44 borrowers are either mixed (for example a brother or sister, a mother and children), identified only by initials and untraceable in any other records, or their signatures are totally unreadable.

³⁰⁸ Pearson, *Women's reading in Britain*; and St Clair, *Reading nation*, pp. 280–283. However one study of a 1770s Warwick circulating library suggests that men borrowed novels as much as women—see Fergus, 'Eighteenth-Century Readers in Provincial England', pp. 155–218, p. 179.

³⁰⁹ This raises questions about how the library room and its stock was organised. Were the most popular titles shelved separately from the 1000+ other titles for the librarian's convenience?

³¹⁰ Kaufman, *Libraries and their Users*, pp. 28–35 summarises overall trends. P. Kaufman, *Borrowings from the Bristol Library 1773–1784: A Unique Record of Reading Vogues* (Charlottesville, 1960) counts how often each title was borrowed.

However, broadly speaking, the Haddington library's borrowings were probably similar to what might have been seen at a similar institution at the same time in England.

Gray Library's borrowings highlight the complicated relationship between demand and supply. Although the stock of the library was predominantly religious, the books borrowed—at least after 1750—were not, and only a relatively small number of popular titles could appeal to a wide readership. On the downside, the library lacked some key books, particularly novels of which it only had a few, reducing the extent to which it could support entertainment reading.³¹¹ Even though the library provided free borrowing for local residents, there would still be a question over whether people could really obtain the books they wanted, and how much they needed to supplement library borrowings with other sources of reading material. Nevertheless the overall patterns of reading choices are broadly consistent with wider trends.

Gray Library's shortfall of novels is especially apparent when compared with subscription and circulating libraries, particularly from the early 19th century. The Selkirk Subscription Library's readers' register and daybook reveal a significant number of novels borrowed alongside other reading material, as the extract below of one reader's borrowings shows.

³¹¹ Rare examples of fiction were been found in the multi-volume collected works of Henry Fielding. The Gray Library borrowing register even records borrowers specifically referring to such works as *Amelia* and *Tom Jones*.

Rev. Mr Balfour, Bowden	
Given out	
Decr 23	1&2 vols of Sylla's memoirs 1 vol of the life of the Duke of Marl.
Janr 1	1 vol Macqueens letters in Humes His. 2 vol Leonora a novel
June 4	Embassy to China 3vol Robertsons History Chas 3 4 vol
Febr 27	Gibbons Roman Empire 1 vol
Ap 24	Caroline of Litchfield 4 vol
30 Ap 1809	Letters from the manufact.
30	Semples Travels
1810 Janr 18	Arabian Knights Enter. 2v
19	Fieldings Works 7 8 9th vols
19	Vicar of Wakefield 1stv
Feb'y 1	Vicar of Wakefield 2d vol
1	Grevelle (Miss) 3 volumes
1	Reids Enquiry
	Interesting Memoirs 2v
July 20	Recess 3v
Octr 16	A Winter in London 3v

Figure 8: Sequence of borrowings from Selkirk Subscription Library in 1809³¹²

Source: Selkirk Subscription Library Readers' Daybook 1808–1814, Scottish Borders Archive and Local History Centre, S/PL/7/2, folio 6 (recto).

In this small sample just over 40% of the borrowings were entertainment (mostly novels), just over 50% improvement works, and only 5% religious works, highlighting the greater provision for entertainment reading at this library, and the decline in religious borrowing by this time. Such a detailed library borrowing register deserves further study. Selkirk Subscription Library was founded in 1772 but the surviving borrowing records start in 1799 and run through to 1814. This library was used by both subscribers and other permitted groups, the latter notably including a large number of French prisoners of war between 1811 and 1814. However the analysis below focuses on the records of the local subscribers whose borrowings fill page after page of the readers' register and daybook. Over 80 subscribers are recorded in this way, but identification problems prevent declaring a more exact number confidently.³¹³ About a fifth of the subscribers lived in Selkirk itself, including two surgeons and a writer. Others were from nearby Galashiels and Melrose,

³¹² Scottish Borders Archive and Local History Centre, S/PL/7/1 Selkirk Subscription Library Readers' Register 1799–1808; and S/PL/7/2 Selkirk Subscription Library Readers' Daybook 1808–1814.

³¹³ The Readers' Daybook for 1808 to 1814 includes a list of subscribers written at the very start of the volume. But subscribers changed over time, farmers could move from farm to farm, so it is impossible to differentiate between the different people reliably.

and still more from the surrounding countryside, including many tenant farmers, some landowners, and several church ministers. Almost all the Selkirk library subscribers were male, with just two female members of the gentry included.³¹⁴ As such, the library catered for a narrower section of local society than Gray Library, comprising a very small group, rather than being freely available to an entire town's population.

Frustratingly, both surviving Selkirk borrowing volumes are frequently difficult to read, with badly fading ink compounding the problem of changes in handwriting. Dates are particularly hard to follow, not always recorded reliably, and not as a single sequence of borrowings as at the Haddington library but rather many overlapping records of readers and their individual borrowings throughout each volume. Such practical problems prevent an analysis as complete as was possible with Gray Library. However the Selkirk records can still be a guide to what was read, both popular titles and the overall spread of subjects borrowed.

Between 1799 and 1814, the Selkirk library's subscribers made approximately 12,000 borrowings. Over 600 different titles were borrowed, with far less concentration on a small core of titles than at the Haddington library. Table 7 shows the most popular publications at Selkirk.

³¹⁴ These were the widowed Mrs Scott of Gala, and Miss Plummer of Middlestead.

Table 7: Most popular titles at Selkirk Subscription Library, 1799–1814

Annual Register
 Arabian Nights Entertainment
 Pamphlets
 Burns' Poems
 Edinburgh Review
 Hume's History of England
 Johnson's Works
 Tales of Fashionable Life by Maria Edgeworth
 Henry's History of Great Britain
 Shakespeare's Works
 Travels in the Interior of Africa by Mungo Park
 Minstrelsy of the Border by Walter Scott

Source: Selkirk Subscription Library borrowings database (see Appendices 1 and 2) derived from the library's borrowing registers i.e. Selkirk Subscription Library Readers' Register 1799–1808, Scottish Borders Archive and Local History Centre, S/PL/7/1; and Selkirk Subscription Library Readers' Daybook 1808–1814, Scottish Borders Archive and Local History Centre, S/PL/7/2.

There are some similarities with Gray Library at the same period. Both libraries' most popular publications in the early 1800s included works by Burns and Johnson, and histories by Hume and Henry. However there are more differences overall, not least the preference at Selkirk for the *Annual Register* and *Edinburgh Review*, two periodicals which Gray Library did not stock. Similarly the Selkirk borrowers were able to borrow more up-to-date novels than the older works by Fielding stocked by Gray Library.³¹⁵ There was also a local twist at Selkirk with a significant number of people borrowing the travels of local-born explorer Mungo Park, including members of his own family who borrowed the book regularly. Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Border* was also very popular among the Selkirk subscribers, an almost entirely male group, whereas at Gray Library it was the female borrowers who favoured this title. Both Park's *Travels* and Scott's *Minstrelsy* were popular across Scotland, indeed Britain in general: but it is likely that their local connections boosted their popularity among Selkirk library's predominantly male subscribers more than was the case at other similar institutions.

³¹⁵ Other popular novels at Selkirk included *Emmeline*, *Romance of the Forest*, *Mysteries of Udolpho*, and *Beggar Girl*. In addition the subscribers read Jane Austen's works soon after publication, and similarly Scott's *Waverley*.

Because the Selkirk borrowings were not so tightly focused as at Gray Library, where just 20 titles accounted for half of all borrowings, the most popular titles at Selkirk are not as good a guide to what was being read overall. An alternative approach is to look at the subjects of borrowings, categorising titles borrowed by subject and looking at the cumulative picture. At Gray Library the changing picture of subjects borrowed could be charted over a long period of time. The surviving Selkirk library records cover a shorter period, preventing a similar chronological analysis to that of Gray Library. However a broad view across all the Selkirk borrowings is possible, as Figure 9 shows.

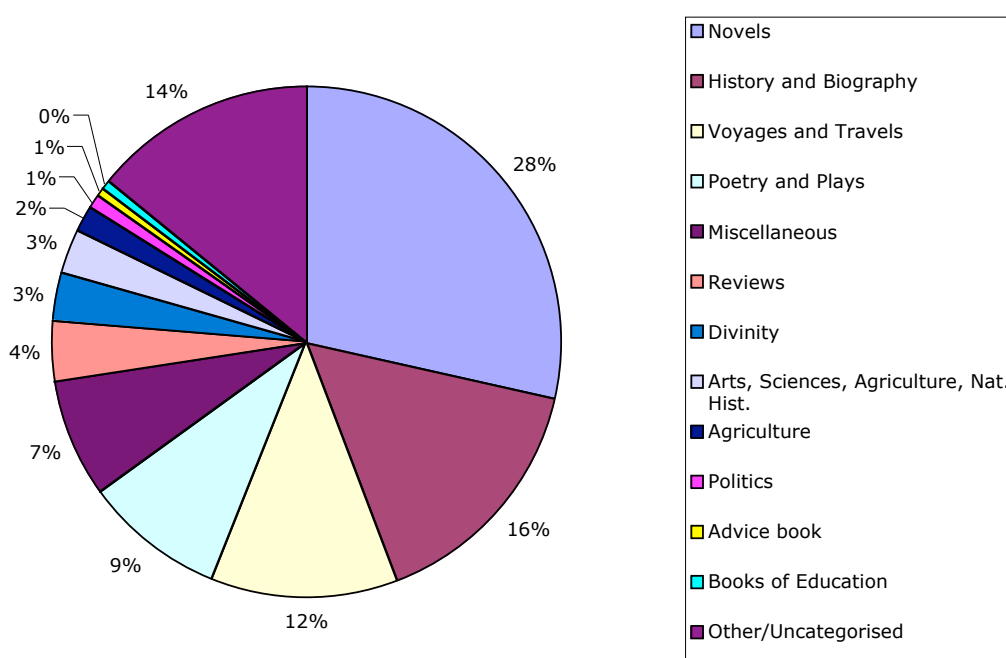


Figure 9: Subjects borrowed at Selkirk Subscription Library, 1799–1814³¹⁶

REI: religion 4%, entertainment 48%, improvement 48%

Source: Selkirk Subscription Library borrowings database (see Appendices 1 and 2) derived from the library's borrowing registers i.e. Selkirk Subscription Library Readers' Register 1799–1808, Scottish Borders Archive and Local History Centre, S/PL/7/1; and Selkirk Subscription Library Readers' Daybook 1808–1814, Scottish Borders Archive and Local History Centre, S/PL/7/2.

³¹⁶ This is based upon analysing the subjects of 9941 Selkirk Library borrowings i.e. not all of them, but a large enough proportion to give a representative result.

Novels were the most popular individual subject choice by far, and approximately 100 different ones were borrowed at Selkirk in this period. This fondness for novels accounts for the significant presence of entertainment reading among the Selkirk borrowings, making up approximately 48% of the categorisable borrowings. Improvement reading comes in at a similar percentage, with a particularly strong preference for books about history and biography, and voyages and travels. This enthusiasm for such improving reading mirrors Gray Library and its borrowings at the same time, though Selkirk library's improvement books also included some different works, such as agricultural publications, reflecting Selkirk's rural setting and the large number of tenant farmers among the subscribers. Agricultural reading through this library and other means is discussed more fully in Chapter 5.

The third category from the REI classification, religion, comes in at just 4% of the Selkirk borrowings. This proportion of religious borrowing is similar to the Dundee Public Library at the same time, and even less than Gray Library where religious borrowings even at this period were still boosted by its specialist collection of religious books. Generally, though, library borrowing records from this era probably underestimate the extent of religious reading, since people could have their own copies of the Bible at home for devotional purposes, and had no need to borrow them from libraries.

Selkirk Subscription Library's borrowings show how much readers, given access to suitable reading material, were reading for a mix of entertainment and improvement reasons by the end of the period. Since the Gray Library records had a significant lack of novels among their stock, they underplay the growing importance of entertainment reading, although they do support the dominance of improvement reading, and the gradual decline in religious borrowings.

Class and choice of reading material

Although the library analyses provide a broad picture, they raise the question of whether different sectors of society were reading different things. This is particularly apparent in the comparison between Selkirk Subscription Library's borrowings and those of the free Gray Library; the latter library available free to all inhabitants of Haddington, the former available only to a restricted group of the middling sort and at a charge.

In the early decades Gray Library's borrowers were heavily biased towards the professional classes, and, above all, ministers. Later an increasing number of people from other sectors of society, particularly artisans, became borrowers as well, with by far the largest increase in the 1730s–1810s being the borrowings of artisans and tradesmen:

Table 8: Changing occupational balance of Gray Library borrowers³¹⁷

	1730s-1750s	1760s-1780s	1790s-1810s
Professionals	57%	43%	33%
Merchants	19%	21%	17%
Artisans/tradesmen	17%	31%	42%
Gentry	6%	0%	0%
Farming/agriculture	0%	4%	2%
Military	0%	1%	2%
Unskilled	0%	0%	3%

Source: Gray Library borrowings database (see Appendices 1 and 2) derived from Gray Library borrowing registers 1732–1816, NLS MS 16480–16481.

The proportion of professional borrowers may be over-estimated though, because they could be easier to trace, often leaving a greater record in the relevant documents.³¹⁸

Another group of potential borrowers who might be easier to identify are little represented: the gentry, though they may have had less need for the library due to the likelihood of having their own library or borrowing amongst friends. Rare exceptions include elderly

³¹⁷ The occupational categories are based on the identified subset of borrowers (those whose occupation has been confidently established): 47 out of 117 in 1730s–1750s, 80 out of 255 in 1760s–1780s, and 126 out of 395 in 1790s–1810s.

³¹⁸ Lists of schoolteachers are readily available, as well as ministers and local legal officials. Such people may also have been more likely to leave wills. Local artisans and shopkeepers are better covered by the end of the 18th century in local tax records in the NAS. Before then some can be traced in local council records, but church registers which cover them too do not always specify occupations.

Lady Castlehill (1668–1752) at Stevenson House near Haddington, and probably also her daughter-in-law Mrs Sinclair, who both appear among the borrowers.³¹⁹ Similarly only a handful of farming borrowers appear—particularly Alexander and Andrew Begbie (of East and West farms of Barney mains) in the 1770s and 1780s.³²⁰ Another notable absence given their known presence in Haddington, particularly during the Napoleonic era, are soldiers.³²¹ In 1760 Colonel John Cawfield of ‘General Walgraves Regiment of Dragoon Guards’ borrowed a volume and gifted others when he left Haddington.³²² In 1809, innkeeper Edward Pooley borrowed a volume of Burns for Colonel Bath—possibly the same J. Bath who had borrowed other titles earlier that year, although whether he was linked to troops in the town or travelling on his own is unknown. A clearer army connection can be traced in the 1810–1811 borrowings of George Roy, either the Barrack Sergeant in Haddington or his teenage eldest son. This example is revealed partly using evidence from the local Church of Scotland parish registers which record the baptisms of younger children and identify the father’s occupation.³²³ Of other soldiers temporarily resident in Haddington recorded in the same parish registers, or in the marriage registers of the local Episcopalian Church, none have been firmly identified as borrowers of Gray Library so far.³²⁴

The Gray Library borrowings register record a very diverse mix of borrowers, from unskilled through to gentry. A similar spread would probably be seen at circulating libraries, but not at subscription libraries which were restricted either to the ‘middling sort’ or to working class only. Background and social class may not have been such a

³¹⁹ Martha Lockhart, lady laird of Castlehill near Glasgow, married Sir John Sinclair 4th Baronet of Stevenson. Her sole borrowing from Gray Library in 1750 was a volume of Buchanan’s *History of Scotland*.

³²⁰ Farmers living outside Haddington would have needed special permission to borrow but this could have been granted, particularly for those living inside Haddington parish (mix of urban and rural) but outside the burgh boundaries.

³²¹ Martine, *Reminiscences of the royal burgh of Haddington*, pp. 122–127.

³²² NLS, MS 16479, 11 Mar. 1760.

³²³ General Register Office for Scotland, Edinburgh, Old Parochial Registers 709.

³²⁴ NAS, CH12/2, Haddington Holy Trinity Episcopal Church records. As well as baptism and marriage registers (the latter often including signatures for bride and groom) this church’s records include a ‘Register of Members’ (CH12/2/23) providing useful family listings, including older children born elsewhere.

restriction in some parts of Scotland, for example in Edinburgh, the hotbed of Enlightenment thinking.³²⁵ However it is likely that background was still a dividing issue elsewhere, making it all the more remarkable to see such a mix using this one library.

In the 1790s–1810s, the largest groups of Gray Library borrowers whose occupations can be confidently identified are professionals, merchants, and artisans/tradesmen. Table 9 shows what each group was borrowing, together with estimated REI figures:

Table 9: Borrowings of occupational groups at Gray Library, 1790s–1810s

	Professionals	Merchants	Artisans/ Tradesmen	All borrowers
Arts, Sciences, Agriculture, and Natural History	5%	3%	5%	6%
Books of Education	0%	0%	0%	0%
Classics	1%	1%	2%	2%
Divinity	10%	4%	3%	7%
Geography and Topography	0%	0%	0%	0%
History and Biography	51%	63%	57%	53%
Miscellaneous	15%	4%	11%	10%
Poetry and Plays	9%	7%	10%	8%
Voyages and Travels	8%	18%	11%	13%
REI	10, ~17, ~73	4, ~9, ~87	3, ~16, ~81	7, ~13, ~80

Source: Gray Library borrowings database (see Appendices 1 and 2) derived from Gray Library borrowing registers 1732–1816, NLS MS 16480–16481.

As a group, the professionals borrowed more religious books than the other borrowers, probably a legacy of the library's fine collection of religious volumes which, even at the end of the period, could still attract serious religious scholars. The other groups were overwhelmingly interested in improving books, particularly history, biographies, voyages and travels. Generally, though, the picture is one of similarity between the different occupational groups, suggesting that if the Gray Library borrowers had had access to the same range of books as the Selkirk Subscription Library borrowers—a group made up of a mix of professionals, tenant farmers, and minor gentry—the more diverse mix of Haddington borrowers would have chosen to borrow similar titles as their Selkirk

³²⁵ C. McKean, *Edinburgh: portrait of a City* (London, 1991), p. 125.

counterparts. Furthermore, there were also circulating libraries in Haddington from the late 18th century, so a taste for entertainment reading could have been catered for locally through them, perhaps explaining why Gray Library only stocked fiction in limited numbers.³²⁶ Thinking of the Scottish picture in general, issues of access were probably more of a limiting factor in terms of how widely people read, rather than different sectors of society having radically different reading tastes, and this was a limitation that declined over time as libraries spread rapidly throughout the country.

If individual occupations are examined even more closely at Gray Library, the picture is one of diversity among people with the same occupation. Among known watchmakers for example, William Veitch borrowed mainly Sully's *Memoirs* for his own use in the 1780s. In the 1810s, William Aitken borrowed *Beauties of Scotland* and Burns's *Works* whereas Matthew Dawson at the same time was working through dozens of volumes of Rollin's Roman and Ancient History titles. Similar diversity is seen in the borrowings of known brewers, lawyers, and ministers. The broad overall trends across all borrowers were the shift towards history and improvement, and trend of successive borrowing. Moreover, some groups may have been more likely to borrow certain books than others: ministers or professionals with religious books, lawyers with legal ones, female borrowers with poems. Beyond that, however, the borrowing picture from reader to reader was predominantly one of individual variation rather than uniformity, as, indeed, one might expect.

A further relevant observation is that such library records, and, indeed, many surviving records of reading, are notable for the absence of key texts, for example the Enlightenment canon, as studied by Towsey—namely Ossian, Hugh Blair on rhetoric, Smith, most Hume, Ferguson, most Robertson etc. Since these books were all published and enjoyed much success and reprinting, there must, indeed, have been several layers of reading.

³²⁶ R. Alston's online Library History Database (www.r-alston.co.uk/contents.htm, accessed 26th March 2006) lists 4 circulating libraries founded in Haddington in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, including one, Charles Herriot's, active as early as 1778. There may have been even more, unrecorded in the records on which the Library History Database was based. In addition, some Haddington borrowers could have borrowed books from circulating libraries in other towns, such as Dunbar or even Edinburgh.

Evidence from individual readers

Library records—particularly borrowings—are informative because they cover so many readers at once. However libraries were only one source of books, and people could source books to read from multiple places, whether libraries of various kinds, books borrowed from friends, or those purchased. Consequently, reading records kept by individuals are appealing since they can provide a more holistic view of reading. The largest number of such records—retrospective memoirs and autobiographies as discussed in Chapter 3—usually mention only a few specific books, probably tending more towards favourite titles which could be more readily recalled in later years. On the basis of this, there is significant evidence for widespread reading of titles such as Blind Harry's *Wallace*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Arabian Nights* and the gothic novel *Mysteries of Udolpho*.³²⁷ The popularity of Blind Harry's *Wallace* is an important example of Scotland-specific reading, but the other titles are similar to what readers elsewhere in Britain would have been reading. Memoirs and autobiographies are more likely to mention favourite subjects that were read and reveal the popularity of history and biography books, and voyages and travels. Despite the popularity of books such as *Robinson Crusoe*, especially in childhood, novels are less frequently mentioned in autobiographical retrospective accounts, perhaps because of their negative connotations authors of autobiography were unwilling to portray themselves as reading trivia.³²⁸ By contrast, religious books—the *Bible* and specific works such as Boston's *Fourfold State*, Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* and Howie's *Scots Worthies*—were mentioned frequently by all classes.³²⁹ There may have been an element

³²⁷ For example W. Pole (ed.), *The Life of Sir William Fairbairn, Bart.* (London, 1877), pp. 55, 73; Robertson, *Hugh Miller*, pp. 27–29, 45; J. Nicol, *The Life and Adventures of John Nicol, Mariner* (Edinburgh, 1822), p. 36; S. Smiles, *The autobiography of Samuel Smiles, LL.D.* (London, 1905), p. 20; McMillan, *Queen of Science*, pp. 15, 17; Grant, *Mrs Grant of Laggan*, Vol. I, p. 6; and Sidgwick, *The Complete Marjory Fleming*, pp. 10, 14 and 24. *Mysteries of Udolpho* was not stocked by Gray Library, but was borrowed at Selkirk Subscription Library, although the surviving borrowing records under-record how heavily it would have been borrowed soon after publication five years earlier.

³²⁸ Pearson, *Women's reading in Britain*; and St Clair, *Reading nation*, pp. 280–283.

³²⁹ For example Anonymous, *Autobiography of a Scotch Lad: being Reminiscences of Threescore Years and Ten* (Glasgow, 1887), pp. 18–19; Bain, *Autobiography*, pp. 4, 8; Butler, *Narrative of the Life and Travels of Serjeant B___*, p. 14; R. Flockhart, *The Street Preacher, being the Autobiography of Robert Flockhart, late corporal 81st Regiment*,

of mentioning books deemed to be worthy, particularly depending on the potential audience for an autobiography, but the overall impression from memoirs and autobiographies is of the importance of religious reading to many people in this period, which contradicts the evidence of books available on the market, or borrowed from libraries. It is difficult to tell if the continued importance of religious reading was an unusual aspect of Scottish society not found elsewhere. Devotional reading in England at this time has not attracted as much attention from scholars as might be expected if it was as prominent a feature of reading habits as it appears to be in Scottish society.³³⁰

So although memoirs and autobiographies may be useful guides to reading choices, their selective recollection can only provide a snapshot view of what people had been reading. For a more comprehensive picture, contemporary accounts made at the time of reading—detailed diaries recording reading among other activities, and dedicated lists recording what was read—are helpful. The final section of this chapter examines a number of such reading records to see what individual people were reading and how this compared to wider trends. The focus is on the range of books read, and the accounts are examined in chronological order, to help to map patterns against changes over time. Questions to be borne in mind include how much the readers were displaying their individual tastes, and how much their reading choices were a product of their era.

The first account is the unusually detailed diary of Rev. Mr George Ridpath.³³¹ This was discussed in both Chapters 2 and 3, in the first case as an example of a reader borrowing books extensively from a network of friends, in the second as an example of what an

edited etc. (Edinburgh, 1858), pp. 59 onwards; Anonymous, 'Life of a Handloom Weaver'; Anonymous, 'The Life of a Journeyman Baker. Written by Himself', *The Commonwealth*, 1856 December 13, p. 3; Robertson, *Hugh Miller*, p. 27; Paterson, *Autobiographical Reminiscences*, pp. 54–55; and A. Somerville, *The Autobiography of a Working Man* (London, 1848), pp. 41, 55 and 57.

³³⁰ A rare essay on the interaction between English reading habits and religion in this period is S. Mandelbrote, 'The English Bible and its Readers in the Eighteenth Century', in I. Rivers (ed), *Books and their readers in eighteenth-century England: new essays* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 35–78

³³¹ The analysis here is based on the transcribed version of Ridpath's diary—Paul, *Diary of George Ridpath* (abbreviated to *DGR* in subsequent footnotes). The diary's original manuscript volumes are in NAS, CH1/5/122 (1755–1758) and CH1/5/123 (1758–1761).

almost professional reader in terms of the time devoted to his reading. Neither chapter considered his choice of reading material in depth, and that is the focus this time. Ridpath did not keep a separate record of his reading, but his diary is detailed enough to be relied upon as a guide. It refers to reading approximately 1400 times between 1755 and 1761, covering 317 titles. From this it is possible to roughly categorise the books read by subject, using categories similar to those used earlier when analysing the Gray Library borrowings.

Table 10: Number of different titles Rev. Mr George Ridpath read (1755–1761) analysed by subject³³²

History and Biography	81 (25.6%)
Miscellaneous	64 (20.2%)
Classics	50 (15.8%)
Arts, Sciences, Agric., Nat.Hist.	43 (13.6%)
Divinity	24 (7.6%)
Poetry and Plays	23 (7.3%)
Voyages and Travels	14 (4.4%)
Novels	11 (3.5%)
Geography and Topography	5 (1.6%)
Books of Education, &c.	2 (0.6%)
Total	317

REI: religion 8%, entertainment 11%, improvement 82%

Source: Derived from J.B. Paul (ed.), *Diary of George Ridpath Minister of Stitchel 1755–1761* (Edinburgh, 1922).

Ridpath's reading was broad, ranging from heavy-going academic texts through to lighter works. For a church minister, theology was notably absent, particularly when compared with the frequent presence of medical and surgical texts which Ridpath appears to have read to give him new ideas for treatments and methods to try on his sick parishioners.³³³ One possible interpretation of this is that Ridpath would have preferred to be a surgeon, but at least following his traditional family occupation left him some time for reading and other interests, such as medicine. His favourite reading seems to have been ancient classics

³³² This and subsequent individual reading lists are analysed using subject categories based on the William Lyon Mackenzie list, modified where appropriate to take into account an individual's specialist reading interests.

³³³ Ridpath kept a notebook (his *Medical Adversaria*) which he used to record medical receipts and information. The editor of the diary transcript notes that Ridpath 'seems to have prescribed largely for the simpler ailments of his parishioners' (*DGR*, p. 19). The manuscript diary contains fuller medical notes than the transcribed version where the editor was forced to cut them for space.

and history, and it was the classical authors that he would be most likely to read last thing at night, often noting in the diary that he ‘slept on’ Horace, Cicero, or Plautus.³³⁴ Sometimes such works were read in translation, at other times he read them in Latin directly, often comparing different translations and commentaries, and making notes from them.³³⁵ History books could also be in English or Latin, and much of Ridpath’s history reading was based on well-known authorities, including for Scottish history works by Buchanan, Drummond, Melville, Spottiswoode, and—more recently—Robertson. However he also read collections of historical essays, particularly biographical accounts, such as in the multi-volume *Universal History* the lives of Augustus, Socrates, Alexander the Great, and Genghis Khan; and in *General Dictionary* essays including the life of Alfred the Great. Among more recently-published historians Ridpath read William Robertson’s *History of Scotland* and David Hume’s *History of England*, obtaining the latest volumes of both soon after publication. In the same year Ridpath read the work of another Scottish Enlightenment figure, Adam Smith’s *Theory of Moral Sentiments*.³³⁶ Further afield, Ridpath read Voltaire, including his *General History and State of Europe* and *Candide*, the latter prompting Ridpath to look ‘in my dictionary for several uncommon words’.³³⁷ Another French-language work that Ridpath read was the journal *Bibliothèque Raisonnée*, read regularly over the years 1755 to 1760, including a review of Charlevoix’s *History of New France*, an account of a voyage down the Amazon, and articles about electricity, the latter two both examples of two other subjects that he read about extensively: travel and science.³³⁸

³³⁴ For example *DGR*, p. 272, 1759 September 24; *DGR*, p. 301, 1760 February 14; and *DGR*, p. 311, 1760 April 11.

³³⁵ *DGR*, pp. 43–44, 1755 December 2: ‘Read some of the Chaldaick Philosophy in Stanley, comparing it with, and correcting it by, Le Clere’s Translation’.

³³⁶ *DGR*, p. 273, 1759 September 29.

³³⁷ *DGR*, pp. 322–323, 1760 June 20.

³³⁸ *DGR*, p. 17, 1755 July 7; *DGR*, p. 281 1759 October 30; and *DGR*, pp. 23–24, 1755 August 15 Travel books that he read included volumes by Lahontan (on North America), Hanway (on trade, and travels through Europe to Persia), Spon (on Athens), and Keysler (on Germany). Scientific topics included astronomy (*DGR*, p. 175, 1758 January 18 and on numerous other occasions) and chemistry (*DGR*, p. 227, 1759 January 27).

As well as the *Bibliothèque Raisonnée*, Ridpath read other journals and magazines, particularly the *Scots Magazine* and to a lesser extent the *London Magazine*, in both cases commonly reading the monthly issues a couple of months after publication, sometimes via the library, at other times having them sent over to him from Berwick. He also read reviews, praising the *Edinburgh Review* but condemning the *Critical Review* which he considered to be ‘contrived to please the Tories and High Church in political articles and other things’ so that despite its having ‘more vivacity and even a greater show of learning’ he preferred overall the approach of the *Monthly Magazine*.³³⁹ For newspapers, the diary is unusually detailed in terms of how much information it records about Ridpath reading them.³⁴⁰ He read newspapers from Edinburgh and London usually at least once a week, and on a few occasions also the Newcastle paper.³⁴¹ Often he read newspapers at home, sometimes at the houses of friends, and on one occasion he notes that drinking tea with the Kelso schoolmaster was followed by reading newspapers ‘in the tap-room’, probably one of the local public houses.³⁴² Other periodicals that Ridpath read included the *Spectator* and the *Weekly Chronicle* (with Johnson’s *Idler*). Periodicals may have provided a change from heavier-going texts, as did works of fiction, although Ridpath seems from the diary only to have read these rarely. He read Swift’s *Tale of the Tub* and *Gulliver’s Travels* as well as two contemporary publishing sensations, Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy*, and Macpherson’s *Fragments of Highland Poetry*, the latter first spotted by Ridpath in the house of a fellow minister in summer 1760, and then borrowed to read a few months later from neighbour Sir Robert Pringle.³⁴³

Ridpath read an unusually wide choice of reading material, probably influenced by his antiquarian and research interests, particularly in the field of history. Having undertaken

³³⁹ *DGR*, pp. 63 and 239, 1756 April 10 and 1759 March 24.

³⁴⁰ Newspapers are the type of reading material usually omitted from any formal reading lists that people kept, and also less likely—unless in the form of cuttings—to be reliably recorded in commonplace books or similar records of reading.

³⁴¹ For example *DGR*, p. 43, 1755 December 2: ‘Read the Newcastle Paper which some people in the town [Kelso?] get’. Ridpath rarely specified newspaper titles in the diary. An exception was 1760 November 18 when he noted reading *Whitehall Evening Post* and *Edinburgh Mercury*.

³⁴² *DGR*, p. 80, 1756 July 14.

³⁴³ *DGR*, pp. 324 and 337, 1760 June 25 and 1760 September 10.

historical research in archives, he wrote the definitive history book about the Borders, and his reading should to an extent be viewed as that of an author, albeit an amateur one. Given that interest, Ridpath's familiarity with the Enlightenment histories of Hume and Robertson is unsurprising—indeed he almost certainly knew both men through mutual connections in the Borders and Edinburgh. Neither is his reading of other Enlightenment works on subjects as diverse as science and philosophy surprising, given his wide tastes. By contrast, the shortage of religious books and the limited presence of novels is striking, though it was still early days in the latter genre, and Ridpath would have had limited access to novels through his local subscription library, the place from which he obtained so many of his books.³⁴⁴ This raises the question of how much his reading choices were dictated by the supply available to him through the library, and how much they reflect his underlying tastes. Availability would have been a limiting factor to an extent, but the frequency with which he obtained books via other means, for example from friends and relatives, and from local neighbours, suggests that it would not have stopped him accessing specific reading material, if he had really wanted to read it.

In terms of the REI classification system, Ridpath's reading was overwhelmingly improvement reading, at 82%. Entertainment reading was much less, at only 11%, and religious reading was even less again, at just 8%. This is particularly notable for a Church of Scotland minister, although it is possible that Ridpath under-recorded religious reading in his diary, preferring to record leisure reading rather than anything that he specifically needed to read for work reasons.

One question that can be usefully asked of Ridpath's reading is the extent to which it reflected Scottish interests, and how much it reflected wider British ones. Beyond his history reading, particularly about Scotland and above all about the Borders, his reading was probably much in line with what a similar individual of the same class elsewhere in Britain might have read at the same time.

³⁴⁴ Although at least two of the novels according to the diary were sourced from the library: Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* and *Tristram Shandy*.

In summary, Ridpath's reading was mostly antiquarian or research based, in other words self-educating, with very little sign of either devotional reading—particularly surprising given his professional occupation—or lighter entertainment such as novels. The lack of novels fits with the time he lived in; the preference for self-education books less so. While his professional occupation may not have been reflected in his recorded reading choices, his amateur occupation as a writer of a local history book certainly was.

Chronologically the next reader to have left a detailed record of reading was Elizabeth Rose of Kilravock (1747–1815), lady laird and 19th Baroness of Kilravock near Nairn. Unlike Ridpath's her reading record is not in diary form but rather a dedicated reading list covering 1775–1780, containing 217 titles in total.³⁴⁵ Applying the same categories to the Rose list gives a distribution as below.

Table 11: Number of different titles Elizabeth Rose of Kilravock read (1775–1780) analysed by subject

Divinity	49 (30.1%)
Miscellaneous	29 (17.8%)
Poetry and Plays	22 (13.5%)
History and Biography	21 (12.9%)
Voyages and Travels	14 (8.6%)
Novels	12 (7.3%)
Arts, Sciences, Agriculture, and Natural History	8 (4.9%)
Books of Education, %c.	8 (4.9%)
Total	163

REI: religion 30%, entertainment 21%, improvement 49%

Source: Derived from H.W. Drescher (ed.), *Henry Mackenzie Letters to Elizabeth Rose of Kilravock: On Literature, Events and People 1768–1815* (Munster, 1967), pp. 229–240.

Rose's overall reading interests were very different from Ridpath's, with more emphasis on devotional reading, less improvement reading, and a greater interest in entertainment

³⁴⁵ This list is in one of the notebooks in the Rose of Kilravock muniments, National Archives of Scotland, GD125/32/6. It was also reproduced in H.W. Drescher (ed.), *Henry Mackenzie Letters to Elizabeth Rose of Kilravock: On Literature, Events and People 1768–1815* (Munster, 1967), pp. 229–240. Elizabeth Rose also left another record of reading in the form of commonplace books: useful for showing her engaging with specific texts; less useful as a complete record of her reading. For an analysis of these records see Towsey, 'An Infant Son to Truth Engage'.

reading such as novels, poetry and plays. To a large extent, this must be attributed to their individual tastes: Ridpath reading predominantly for self-education and research purposes, hence the high improvement percentage, compared with Rose who, on the basis of this evidence, was much more interested in devotional reading than the minister. Rose's greater appreciation of entertainment reading may possibly have reflected the later period she was living and reading in, with the genre of the novel in the ascendant.

On the basis of the reading list, religion was easily Mrs Rose's favourite reading single subject. The Bible itself is not recorded directly as a title, though Rose almost certainly read it for devotional purposes, but she does record reading numerous volumes of sermons and various editions of the Gospels. Some of her religious reading fitted with events at the time, for example *Meditations on Easter* read in April 1775.³⁴⁶ Other religious reading was perhaps read as relevant to her own situation, for example Fordyce's *Sermon on Female conduct* read in November 1776.³⁴⁷

Religious books were a constant presence in the reading list, but they were typically accompanied by other subjects too. In October 1775 for example, she alternated between secular and religious topics, starting with the third volume of Robertson's history of Charles V, then following it with the second of *Contemplation of Nature*, a novel *The Correspondents*, the first volume of Craig's *Sermons*, *40 New Poems*, before rounding off the month with the second volume of Craig's *Sermons*.³⁴⁸ Such a pattern was typical, and shows a person of good intelligent catholic tastes.

Mrs Rose read many Enlightenment publications, not just histories by Robertson and Hume, but also works by Fergusson, Rousseau and Voltaire. In Ridpath's case, such an interest in Enlightenment thinking reflected a wider interest in science in general, something little evident from Mrs Rose's reading list. By contrast, Mrs Rose appears to

³⁴⁶ Drescher, *Letters*, p. 230.

³⁴⁷ Drescher, *Letters*, p. 234.

³⁴⁸ Drescher, *Letters*, pp. 231–232.

have been far more interested than Ridpath in poetry and plays, a genre that appealed little to the more analytically inclined Ridpath. Mrs Rose's list also has a stronger presence of voyages and travels and novels, both subjects that were growing strongly in her day, and more readily available on the market. However newspapers are missing from the list, but it is likely that Mrs Rose read them, probably Edinburgh and London newspapers as well as Aberdeen ones covering the north of Scotland.³⁴⁹

Considering Mrs Rose's status as a female reader, her interest in lighter entertainment reading such as novels partially reflects conventional stereotypes about female reading preferences as well as the distinctions between male and female reading choices observed at Gray Library. However, such lighter works were not Mrs Rose's major reading interest, and she read far more widely, so it would be unwise to view her reading purely as that of a stereotypical female reader.

Unfortunately, Mrs Rose's reading list gives no clues to where she obtained the books she read. It is likely that she borrowed some from friends, and probably borrowed some more from libraries in Nairn and the vicinity, including nearby Inverness, and perhaps also Edinburgh when she visited there.³⁵⁰ In addition, as an independently wealthy landed woman, she would have been better able than many to buy new books; plus, she had contacts further afield, including her cousin and correspondent Henry Mackenzie who regularly sent new books to her and liaised on her behalf with Edinburgh booksellers.³⁵¹

The longest detailed reading record found for a Scot in this period is that of Robert Hamilton (1743–1829), political economist and Professor of Mathematics in Marischal

³⁴⁹ The *Aberdeen Journal* was founded in 1747 and carried news reports and advertising covering much of northern Scotland.

³⁵⁰ Before her death in 1815 Elizabeth Rose of Kilravock was also a subscriber to the Elgin Circulating Library founded in 1789—see J. Thomas, 'Forming the Literary Tastes of the Middle and Higher Classes: Elgin's Circulating Libraries and their Proprietors, 1789–1870', in J. Hinks and C. Armstrong (eds.), *Worlds of Print: Diversity in the Book Trade* (New Castle and London, 2006), p. 101.

³⁵¹ In early 1776 for example Henry Mackenzie delivered Mrs Rose's order for *The Correspondents* to Edinburgh bookseller Mr Balfour, received the resulting book, and sent it with Mr Balfour's receipt to her—Drescher, *Henry Mackenzie Letters*, p. 185.

College, Aberdeen.³⁵² Hamilton's 'List of Books read' between circa 1790 and 1829 records 1186 items, including for nearly two-thirds of them the source of the book.³⁵³ Usefully Hamilton also notes the source for most of his reading material, revealing that he benefited from good access to libraries in the Aberdeen area, as well as borrowing books from friends and relatives. Newspapers were omitted from the list altogether, though he almost certainly read them, both local ones and those from further afield such as Edinburgh and London. Applying the same broad categories gives the following breakdown.

Table 12: Number of different titles Professor Robert Hamilton read (ca1790–1829) analysed by subject

History and Biography	207 (19.4%)
Voyages and Travels, Geography etc.	161 (15.1%)
Mathematics, Economics, Politics and Science	156 (14.6%)
Divinity	123 (11.5%)
Novels	109 (10.2%)
Poetry and Plays	65 (6.1%)
Reviews	29 (2.7%)
Classics	25 (2.3%)
Others or unsure ³⁵⁴	193 (18.1%)
Total	1068

REI: religion 14%, entertainment 20%, improvement 66%

Source: Derived from University of Aberdeen Special Libraries and Archives, MS457 part 3, Robert Hamilton papers, pp. 487–538.

One of the most striking things about Hamilton's reading list is the variety of subjects. For example, in just 1803 alone, Hamilton read at least 17 titles including a history of mathematics, books on mineralogy and draining, travel books about Egypt, Steuart's life of Dr Robertson, the Bishop of London's lectures on Matthew, 3-volume novels *Mordaunt* and *Lounger*, and various volumes of the *Annual Register*, *Scots Magazine*, and *Nicolson's Journal*. Such variety continued throughout the 40 years, with a particular

³⁵² Thanks to Dr Iain Beavan of Special Libraries and Archives, University of Aberdeen for directing me towards this source.

³⁵³ University of Aberdeen Special Libraries and Archives, MS457 part 3, Robert Hamilton papers, pp. 487–538.

³⁵⁴ A significant number of the books could not be confidently categorised, hence this category. Despite this it is likely that the categorisable books give a representative impression of the spread by subjects. The derived REI percentages below the table are not based on these books, but rather on those whose subject matter could be categorised.

preference for history and biography, voyages and travels, and other popular genres of his time such as novels.³⁵⁵

In his appetite for improvement works such as history and biography Hamilton is similar to Ridpath. However his reading list shows more evidence of work-related reading, not so much mathematics books, as related subjects such as science books.³⁵⁶ Economics books appear even more frequently in the reading list, five times as often as mathematics, such as lengthy parliamentary reports or books about national wealth, currency, and population. Hamilton could have under-recorded his work-related reading, but the greater presence of the economics books argues against this.

Another difference from Ridpath's reading record is the greater presence in Hamilton's reading list of light entertainment, particularly novels. These increase over time: only 3 definite novels read in the 1790s, 12 in the 1800s, 34 by the 1810s, and at least 61 by the 1820s.³⁵⁷ Before 1815, Hamilton's novel reading was relatively modest although he was reading new works, particularly those by female writers such as Maria Edgeworth, Amelia Opie, Jane Porter, Mary Brunton, and Frances Burney. The biggest shift occurred in 1815 when he started to read Scott's *Waverley* novels, reading each soon after publication. At the same time, he began to read other novels in greater volumes, taking in authors read before, newer novelists such as Susan Ferrier and John Galt, and older novels such as Ann Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho*, suggesting that he was exploring the genre, both new titles and older classics. Contemporaries such as moralist Hannah More criticised novels as a poor form of literature and particularly likely to lead young women—the people thought most likely to read them—astray.³⁵⁸ Such stereotypical views mislead though, and

³⁵⁵ For a recent overview of the reading trends in this period see St Clair, *Reading nation*, especially pp. 210–267.

³⁵⁶ These included books about surgery, chemistry, minerology, astronomy, electricity, geography and botany.

³⁵⁷ These figures are based on novels identified by title using online library catalogues and the British Fiction Database. They also tended to stand out as 3-volume works.

³⁵⁸ Pearson, *Women's reading in Britain*; and St Clair, *Reading nation*, pp. 280–283.

other evidence from this time, both of private readers and of the Selkirk Subscription Library borrowing records, shows that men read novels too.³⁵⁹

Hamilton's reading of Scottish material extended beyond Scott's novels. In 1815, for example, as well as the first two Waverley novels Hamilton read Mrs Grant's *Essays on the superstitions of the Highlanders*, Dr Cook's history of the Church of Scotland, Culloden papers, and Thom's *History of Aberdeen*. Scottish subject matter is particularly apparent in the many history and biography books that he read, both national histories of Scotland, for example by Robertson, Buchanan, Pitcottie and Fraser Tytler; and local histories of Leith, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Fife, and the Orkney Islands. Aberdeen is also well represented, not just in the histories by Thom and Kennedy, but also university-related items, including Hugh Leslie's 'Doctors outwitted', an account of his dispute with King's College; and the 1826 addresses to the students by Dr Mearns and Dr Brown. Another local book was the prose and poems of the late James Hay Beattie, obtained by Hamilton from the young Aberdonian's father Dr James Beattie of Marischal College, Hamilton's colleague.³⁶⁰ Scottish poetry is generally well represented, most notably Scott's poems, but also Burns with Dr Currie's *The Works of Robert Burns, with an account of his life* in 1802 and Lockhart's *Life of Robert Burns* in 1828. He also read Irving's *Lives of the Scottish Poets* and the report of the Highland Society on Ossian's poems. Poetry from elsewhere is largely absent, apart from numerous poems by Lord Byron in the 1810s, someone with historic Aberdeen links. Hamilton may have been interested in local subject matter, but Scottish reading material only accounted for approximately 8% of his reading list, i.e. a very small minority.

He read widely about wider topical events. Between 1791 and 1794, Hamilton read accounts of the French revolution by Burke, Christie, Moore and Brissot. In 1815 and

³⁵⁹ Novel reading by men is revealed in sources such as diaries, letters, and borrowing records, albeit usually less completely than the evidence in Hamilton's case.

³⁶⁰ James Hay Beattie died in 1790 and his book was released by his father, firstly as 200 copies circulated privately, then an edition published in 1799. Hamilton read the book in 1798 so presumably read one of the privately circulated copies.

1816 he read Scott and Simson's poems 'Field of Waterloo', and in 1823 'Voice from St Helena', an account of Napoleon's time there. Likewise, he followed the debate about slavery, starting before 1790 with Ramsay's writings on American slavery, and in 1808 Clarkson's *Abolition of the African slave trade*. In 1825, he obtained a series of anti-slavery pamphlets and other publications from George Brantingham, a local bookseller in Aberdeen and treasurer of the Aberdeen Anti-Slavery Society, suggesting that Hamilton himself was anti-slavery as well.³⁶¹

In terms of subject categorisation Hamilton's proportion of entertainment reading was similar to Rose's, although in this category Rose preferred poetry and plays, whereas Hamilton favoured novels. Hamilton's religious reading proportion was lower than hers, and improvement reading was the most significant category for him, accounting for two-thirds of his reading, closer to the reading pattern of Ridpath half a century earlier.

It is clear that Hamilton was a heavy reader, and, like Ridpath, a man whose reading interests did not solely reflect what might be expected given his occupation. Hamilton did read some material related to his work, particularly mathematics, economics and politics books. But his reading was much wider than that, with a clear leaning towards improvement subjects such as history and travel books, supplemented by a considerable reading of novels. His reading also shows the greatest correlation of an individual with events of his time, with frequent reading of works related to the French Revolution and its Napoleonic aftermath and the anti-slavery movement in Britain, showing that he kept up to date with political events. His reading also reflects the massive growth in novels, including the publishing phenomenon of Scott's Waverley novels.

These three readers were all adults when they recorded their reading. The final selected reader was only 11 when he opened his list: William Lyon Mackenzie (1795–1861) from Dundee, who emigrated to Canada in 1820 and became a notable journalist and

³⁶¹ This biographical information comes from the Scottish Book Trade Index (SBTI), www.nls.uk/catalogues/resources/sbti/, accessed 12 Feb. 2006.

politician.³⁶² His reading list covers his time in Scotland, listing 958 volumes read between 1806 and 1820, i.e. between the ages of 11 and 25. Unfortunately the original manuscript list is lost, but a transcribed version exists in a biography published soon after Mackenzie's death.³⁶³ Mackenzie categorised his reading under a number of subject headings, including for each title noting the year (or years) in which the item was read. From this a broad picture of Mackenzie's youthful reading starts to emerge:

Table 13: Number of different titles William Lyon Mackenzie read (1806–1820) analysed by subject

Novels	127 (26.3%)
Poetry and Plays	84 (17.4%)
Miscellaneous	67 (13.9%)
History and Biography	54 (11.2%)
Divinity	45 (9.3%)
Books of Education, &c.	31 (6.4%)
Voyages and Travels	31 (6.4%)
Arts, Sciences, Agriculture, and Natural History	30 (6.2%)
Geography and Topography	13 (2.7%)
Total	482

REI: religion 9%, entertainment 44%, improvement 47%

Source: Derived from C. Lindsey, *The Life and Times of William Lyon Mackenzie*, Vol. II, pp. 303–313.

Once again improvement reading was a significant force, though nearly outnumbered for the first time in this group of individual readers by entertainment reading. Religious reading was only present in Mackenzie's reading list in relatively small quantities, harking back to Ridpath half a century earlier. Nonetheless Mackenzie read popular religious texts such as Howie's *Scots Worthies* and collections of sermons, so his religious reading should not be totally disregarded, for it had a role in his life. Indeed the proportion of Mackenzie's reading that was religious was higher than the proportion of religious reading emerging from contemporary library records, reflecting how it could be underestimated if library records were the only sources studied. Overall, it appears that Mackenzie read predominantly to learn about things, and for entertainment.

³⁶² Read, 'Mackenzie, William Lyon (1795–1861)'.

³⁶³ The transcript is included in Appendix A of Lindsey, *The Life and Times of William Lyon Mackenzie*, Vol. II, pp. 303–313.

Novels were the category of publications Mackenzie read in greatest quantity, particularly from 1808 onwards, and most notably in 1817 when he read 19 of them—almost two thirds of his total reading in that year. The second most read category was ‘Poetry and Plays’, a mixture of works by Burns, Scott, Thomson, Milton, and others, as well as a significant quantity of playbooks grouped together in the list and read mostly before 1812. The reading list reveals sustained interest in history and travel books, but a diminishing interest in religion: two-thirds of the divinity titles had been read by 1811 when Mackenzie had reached 16. Mackenzie’s miscellaneous category was a bit of a catch-all, including a mixture of memoirs (including Mrs Grant’s *Letters from the Mountains*), parliamentary and other acts, and classical tales and fables, and even some novels such as Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy*. However this category mostly included magazines and journals: local titles such as the *Dundee Repository* and *Dundee Magazine*; and more distant ones such as *Monthly Review*, *Quarterly Review*, *Edinburgh Magazine*, *Town and Country Magazine*, *London Magazine* and *Spectator*. Newspapers were omitted though we know that Mackenzie read them as well. The *Dundee, Perth and Cupar Advertiser* was apparently the first newspaper that he read, and his newspaper reading increased after he was admitted to the Dundee news-room circa 1812.³⁶⁴

Mackenzie benefited from living in a large town with a growing number of bookshops, coffee rooms, reading rooms and libraries. At some stage he may have borrowed books from the Dundee Library, whose librarian bookseller Edward Lesslie had strong ties with him later in life.³⁶⁵ In 1808 Mackenzie helped to found The Rational Society in Dundee and, according to his memoirs, became its first librarian, further increasing his reading opportunities.³⁶⁶ Access to the Dundee news-room increased his reading options still further, and he may have gained more control over his reading in 1814 when he established

³⁶⁴ Lindsey, *William Lyon Mackenzie*, Vol. I, pp. 26–27.

³⁶⁵ At this time in Dundee there were two subscription libraries: Dundee Public Library founded in 1795, and Dundee Library founded in 1792. The two institutions merged in 1815. There were also a number of circulating libraries in the town.

³⁶⁶ Reports of the foundation of this literary institution in Dundee (initially called ‘The Rational Society’) appeared in the *Dundee, Perth and Cupar Advertiser* of 1809 April 21 (reporting on the previous 7 months of meetings) and 1810 December 14.

a general store in Alyth, Perthshire, with an attached lending library.³⁶⁷ That business failed circa 1817 and Mackenzie left for England, staying there until shortly before he emigrated to Canada.³⁶⁸

Mackenzie's reading tastes also reflected the times he lived in, particularly in his preference for novels, the poetry of Burns and Scott, and history books. Magazines and journals were clearly important to him, as they had been with Ridpath, and reviews of interesting new books catching his attention probably helped to direct his reading.

It is worth noting that he was reading the same books as adults, with little evidence of books aimed specifically at younger readers. Comparing his reading to the adult readers, it is noticeable how significant novel reading was for Mackenzie, perhaps reflecting either his youth, or the time that he lived in. Since his reading list recorded the nationalities of the authors of the works he read, we know that nearly 40% of the items he read were by English authors, just under a third by Scottish authors, the balance being Irish, German, Swiss, Greek, Spanish, and American. Many titles would have been similar to what a similar individual elsewhere in Britain might have read, but the significant proportion of Scottish-authored works is distinctive.

Reflecting back on the four readers considered in depth the impression throughout is that all four were highly enthusiastic, heavy readers, probably atypical of the general reading population, but typical enough of keen ones. Each reflected the times in which they lived in terms of both the genres and subjects of the books that they read. Reading trends highlighted by the four include the ongoing importance of improvement, a growing fondness for entertainment, and a decline in religious reading. However each reader also displayed highly individual tastes for books, in at least two cases going against what might be expected from their occupations alone. In addition, although each reader had their own

³⁶⁷ Lindsey, *William Lyon Mackenzie*, Vol. I, p. 29.

³⁶⁸ Lindsey, *William Lyon Mackenzie*, Vol. I, p. 30–33.

favourite subject, they read far more widely than this, an important warning against viewing reading in too simplistic a manner.

Conclusions

Although this was the intellectually flourishing era of the Scottish Enlightenment, few historians have considered what Scots at the time were actually reading.³⁶⁹ This chapter sheds light on that question, taking into account what was available in libraries and bookshops and then studying actual readers in detail, both individually and en masse.

Overall the picture is one of increasing diversity and complexity, highlighted not least by the increasingly wide range of titles and subjects for sale in bookshops across Scotland such as Ebenezer Wilson's in Dumfries. Wilson's bookshop was particularly well stocked, but studying other booksellers and their stock during the period shows a gradual shift from selling predominantly religious books to a more diverse range of subjects. From surviving evidence for what was available in bookshops and libraries it is impossible to pinpoint precisely the key points of change in what people were reading. The copyright trials in the 1770s would have made Old Canon texts more readily available, but we cannot tell for example when secular books became more widely read throughout Scotland than religious texts. Nevertheless there is clear evidence of a process of change in what people were reading taking place during the period, even if the precise way in which this developed over time cannot be fully understood.

For points of change at a local level, and dramatic change at that, the clearest evidence is found in the Gray Library borrowings. These show a burgeoning interest in improvement subjects such as history and voyages and travels, and a decline in religious reading from as early as the 1750s. The Gray Library borrowings also revealed how men were more likely to favour factual texts, while women favoured novels and poetry. However men also read

³⁶⁹ The key exception being Towsey in his concurrent doctoral thesis, although his focus was very much on key Enlightenment texts rather than wider reading habits.

novels, as the Selkirk Subscription Library borrowings demonstrate, emphasising the importance of entertainment reading by this time in Scotland.

Quantifying the proportions of religious, entertainment and improvement publications represented in the various records of reading studied throughout the chapter permitted a systematic study of change over time. Looking chronologically at booksellers and their stock, the clear impression emerging from the REI analysis is of a dramatic drop over time in the proportion of religious texts, and an equivalent growth in entertainment; above both was improvement reading. This impression is further reinforced from library records, both catalogues representing what was stocked on the library shelves, and borrowings recording what was borrowed. Gray Library borrowings switched from 86% religious and 11% improvement borrowings in the 1730s to 8% religion and 75% improvement by the 1810s. However library records probably under-represented the extent of religious reading in the community, since religious books were often owned. Thus records of reading kept by individuals could provide a balance, although even there, the record could distort. Such records, too, could under-estimate religious reading, as in the case of George Ridpath, the Church of Scotland minister who apparently rarely read religious works, at least according to his daily diary, although this is unlikely to tell the full story because he would have had difficulty functioning as a Minister without it. However other individual readers did record religious reading in their reading records, suggesting that these records could be a good guide to its relative importance within their wider reading habits. Even there, there was a marked decline over time in the extent of religious reading, whilst, at the same time, entertainment reading was on the rise.

The question of Scottish reading habits differing from British recurred throughout. Some Scottish-specific features emerged, for example the repeated preference recorded in memoirs for people reading Blind Harry's *Wallace* and Howie's *Scots Worthies*. In the early 19th century Gray Library borrowers showed a particular preference interest in Forsyth's 5-volume *Beauties of Scotland*. Similarly among individual readers studied in

depth, Ridpath was an ardent student of Scottish history, and a third of William Lyon Mackenzie's reading material was written by Scottish authors. Generally, though, the impression is that people read works similar to those of their counterparts elsewhere in Britain, so it is more a case of similarities than of differences. Having said that, if an equivalent REI analysis was computed for English reading, both individually and studied in groups, a different balance between the three main categories of reading might emerge. Nothing like this has yet been attempted in England, so it remains a potential question for the future.

Chapter 5: Styles of reading and reasons for reading

Chapter 4 reviewed what people were reading in Scotland in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, drawing on evidence for what was available on the market and in libraries, and above all on what groups of readers and individuals were reading. In the process, the growing importance over time of improvement and entertainment reading was identified, alongside the decline in relative terms of religious reading. However wider chronological and international contexts were not fully addressed, including how far Scottish readers of this period fit into Engelsing's 'reading revolution', a concept used by historians around the world to contextualise changing reading habits during the long 18th century. This chapter considers the manner in which people were reading, including examining the case for Engelsing's revolution in a Scottish context, and the variety of types of reading found in the historical evidence.

Engelsing's reading revolution was first described in his pioneering study of reading habits in early modern Germany.³⁷⁰ In this, he argued for evidence of a gradual shift during the 18th century from an intensive to a more extensive style of reading, and an increasing secularization of subject matter. Intensive reading is frequent rereading of a small number of books, particularly religious texts. By contrast, extensive reading indicates that a much greater number of books and range of subject matter were being read. Typical of Engelsing's argument would be a reader circa 1700 who might have a Bible, which they read repeatedly, but little access to other reading material. By 1800 or so, an equivalent reader might still have access to a Bible at home, but would be reading a broader range of material, whether of their own or borrowed from local libraries, or from friends and relatives. Thus Engelsing's argument is based not just on the range of books read, but on the volume of books read.

³⁷⁰ Engelsing, *Der Bürger als Leser*.

Following in the footsteps of Engelsing's research, historians in other countries have sought to discover whether the reading patterns in their countries followed a similar pattern.³⁷¹ Such studies tend by their nature to examine extended periods of time. On the basis of such research, some historians have argued for local evidence of an Engelsing-like shift. Others debate the 'revolution', including its speed, timing, and the true diversity of reading practices present.³⁷² Wittmann, for example, disputes the dramatic nature of the change, although he nevertheless accepts that there was a growth in reading habits, particularly in the urban classes, and a shift towards a more modern form of reading.³⁷³

Reflecting on the Scottish evidence in Chapter 4, the clearest chronological change can be seen in the Gray Library borrowings, a study of over 80 years worth of borrowings. Although this was just one library, it was a free one, and therefore might serve as a guide to what a wide cross-section of the local population might choose to read. There was a dramatic shift from predominantly religious borrowing of a number of limited texts in the early decades through to a more diverse borrowing pattern in the early 19th century. Reassuringly, this local picture is supported by wider evidence, such as the bookseller stock lists from elsewhere in Scotland, and some of the individual readers studied in depth.

However, this chapter argues for a more complex view of Scottish reading choices than Engelsing's. In the process, the variety of styles of reading will be explored, together with the range of reasons which prompted people to read in the first place. Extending the discussion to consider reasons for reading provides a fuller picture of local patterns of reading habits.

³⁷¹ Examples include de Kruif, 'Classes of readers'; H. Grönroos and A-C. Nyman, *Boken i Finland ... 1656–1809* (Helsinki, 1996), reviewed in *Scandinavian Studies*, Vol. 70 (1998), p. 112; and Robert, 'Le livre et la lecture dans la noblesse canadienne 1670–1764'.

³⁷² Jackson, 'Approaches to the history of readers and reading in eighteenth-century Britain', p. 1050; and Finkelstein and McCleery, *An introduction to book history*, p. 113.

³⁷³ R. Wittmann, 'Was there a Reading Revolution at the End of the Eighteenth Century', in G. Cavallo and R. Chartier (eds.), *A History of Reading in the West* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 284–312.

Probing reading patterns more deeply: supply and demand

An argument can be made that the shift in borrowing patterns in the Haddington library records was as much due to changing stock patterns and types of borrowers coming into the library as any underlying change in reading tastes. In its earliest decades, Gray Library had only its specialist collection of religious books to lend to local readers. From 1750 onwards the library's trustees ordered new books for the library, regularly drawing up lists of recommended titles to order from the booksellers.³⁷⁴ The choice of titles was somewhat restricted: fiction was largely absent and periodicals, including reviews, likewise.³⁷⁵ Nevertheless many popular titles were acquired for the library, and of the ninety-plus titles ordered and bought by the trustees between 1750 and 1810 many were borrowed heavily as soon as they were bought.³⁷⁶ As the library's holdings were changing, the mix of borrowers altered too. Ministers still used the library, but local professionals and merchants, and later artisans, increasingly appeared as borrowers. In the earliest years, such borrowers often borrowed religious books: for example in the 1740s and 1750s Andrew Dickson (merchant), Dr James Lundie (surgeon) and John Martine (tanner and postmaster) borrowed mainly published sermons and annotations on the Bible.³⁷⁷ By the 1760s, such borrowers were favouring other subjects—principally history and biography.

If the basic pattern of borrowing is fairly easily established, more difficult is to say what this meant or how we should view it appropriately. For example, was Gray Library responding to reader demands, or was it deliberately trying to shape their tastes? If the former, even in part, then it is more useful as an indication or reflection of broad patterns. It is certainly true that libraries in Scotland at this time could shape tastes, and likely that

³⁷⁴ NLS, MS 16479, 1750 February 28.

³⁷⁵ This is in stark contrast to contemporary subscription libraries, for example Arbroath Private Subscription Library which in 1809 was buying the *Monthly Review*, *Monthly Magazine*, *Critical Review*, and *Edinburgh Review*—Angus Archives, Forfar, MS 451/2/1, Arbroath Subscription Library Catalogue, 1797–1844.

³⁷⁶ Purchased books mirrored the borrowing patterns. The library continued long-term to buy religious books (particularly sermons) but history soon predominated.

³⁷⁷ As sometime provosts these borrowers are easier to identify because their signatures are frequently recorded in the Haddington council minutes (NAS B30/13) and can thus be compared with signatures in the Gray Library borrowing register.

some set out deliberately to do so, particularly subscription libraries. At the other end of the spectrum, commercial circulating libraries needed to supply the books that their customers wanted just to survive. Gray Library was fortunate in its position, facing little competition from other local libraries until the early 19th century when local booksellers started circulating libraries.³⁷⁸ It thus had the opportunity to shape reader tastes, and exercised this by encouraging locals to read worthy and improving books. Frustratingly the surviving library committee minutes do not reveal the reasons why specific titles were bought, or what the overriding goals of the trustees were. A local history book includes the observation that Gray Library's regulations prevented it from stocking fiction.³⁷⁹ No such regulation has been traced in the library's early records, and even from the 18th century fiction was stocked, albeit in small numbers, though it is still possible that the library was reluctant to stock this genre in any sizeable quantity. Despite this shortfall, the library's trustees' correct assessment of their readership is demonstrated by how quickly and the extent to which new books, including the improving titles, were borrowed after acquisition.

Volume of reading

A stronger case can be made for borrowers turning around books more quickly later in the period, another element of Engelsing's 'reading revolution'. Repeat borrowers in the 1750s tended to borrow books every six months; by the 1800s, half of such borrowers returned to the library fortnightly or even more frequently. Part of the reason for this shift may be explained by a change in library regulations, switching from multiple volume borrowing to one volume at a time. This change appears to have happened early in the 1780s, probably as library borrowing increased rapidly, leading to a change to keep things running smoothly and to maintain availability. Certainly by 1828, the library's printed regulations included the rule that 'no more than one book, or volume of a book, be lent to

³⁷⁸ These included George Neill (from circa 1805), George Miller (from 1814) and George Tait (by 1826). Some Haddington inhabitants would have been able to access circulating libraries in Edinburgh, but many more of them would not.

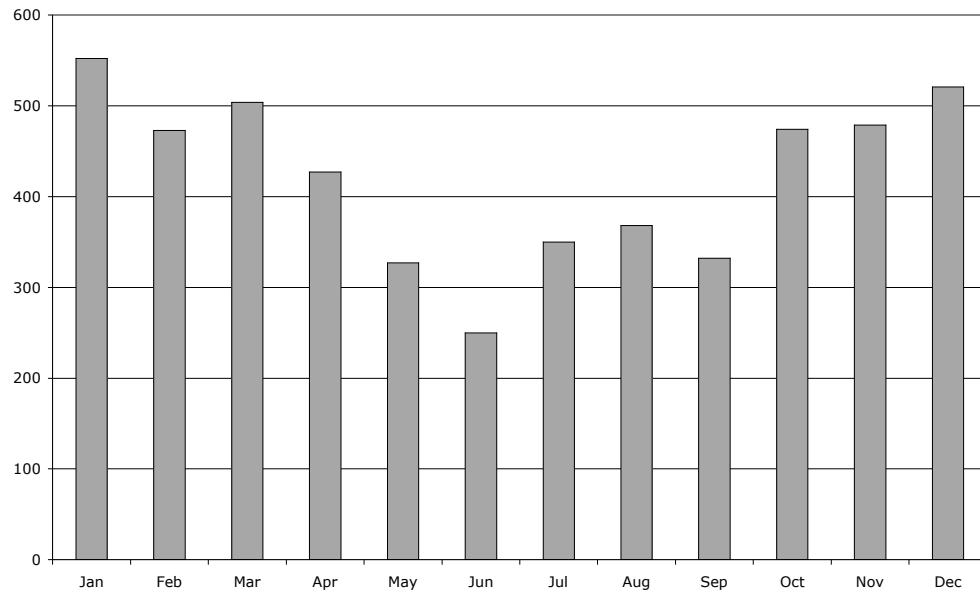
³⁷⁹ W.F. Gray, *A short history of Haddington*, p. 138.

any person at a time'.³⁸⁰ One consequence of this is that people increasingly had to work through multi-volume works in turn, returning time and again to borrow successive volumes. This was the case not just with multi-volume anthologies such as the *Universal History* (Ancient and Modern, twenty and forty-four volumes respectively) and Rollin's *History* (Ancient and Roman, six and sixteen volumes), but also with shorter works.³⁸¹ For example David Diddep, teenage son of a local Writer, borrowed books twenty-five times between December 1808 and November 1809, working in turn through successive volumes of Rollin's *Ancient History*, Callander's *Collection of Voyages*, Marshall's *History of General Washington*, and Cook's *Voyages*, as well as single volumes such as Boswell's *Account of Corsica* and Clarkson's *Slave Trade*. Reading volumes in turn had become the norm among regular borrowers at Gray Library.

Because the dates of borrowings at Gray Library are recorded so well, it is even possible to study how the borrowing patterns varied throughout the year, as Graph 3 shows.

³⁸⁰ *Catalogue of the Books in the Town of Haddington's Library*, p. iv.

³⁸¹ These volume counts are based on the numbers of volumes listed for each title in the 1828 Gray Library catalogue.



Graph 3: Borrowings by month at Gray Library, 1732–1816

Source: Gray Library borrowings database (see Appendices 1 and 2) derived from Gray Library borrowing registers 1732–1816, NLS MS 16480–16481.

There was a significant dip in borrowings in the summer months, and correspondingly more borrowings as autumn and winter set in, suggesting that for this (albeit large) group of readers, reading was something associated more with winter time. For a much smaller group of borrowers at a similar time Towsey observed a similar seasonal variation recorded in the borrowings of Wigtown Subscription Library.³⁸²

Such detailed month-by-month analysis is impossible with the Selkirk Subscription Library records because dates are not recorded consistently enough. However it is possible to consider the total volume of borrowings over time at Selkirk. Given that there were only approximately 80 subscribers at Selkirk, the volume of borrowings suggests that the borrowers there were borrowing on average 8 times as many books per reader as Gray Library borrowers at the same time. There were heavy borrowers at Gray Library too, for example William Pringle, who borrowed books 100 times between 1788 and 1813. But such heavy borrowers were outnumbered by other more casual borrowers, lowering the

³⁸² M. Towsey, 'First Steps in Associational Reading: Book Use and Sociability at the Wigtown Subscription Library, 1795–9', *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, Vol. 103 (2009), pp. 463–465.

total average. By contrast, most of the Selkirk subscribers were enthusiastic borrowers, and it is likely that they were people who had ample time to read, and this was one of the reasons why they chose to join such an institution. By contrast, anyone living in Haddington, heavy reader or light, was freely able to come into Gray Library to borrow a book.

Longevity of educational reading

There may have been a gradual change towards an increasingly recreational style of reading, but educational reading remained important at Gray Library throughout the period studied. This is seen most strikingly in a number of working-class youngsters who stand out because of the volume of books they borrowed. All were sons of artisans or similar, and later in life became professionals, mostly remaining in Haddington. For example, between the ages of thirteen and fifteen Alexander Matthew (1795–1855), a glover's son who became a Justice of the Peace and Solicitor at Haddington Sheriff Court, borrowed books from Gray Library on most weeks, particularly favouring histories, working in turn through multi-volume works such as Rollin's *Ancient History*, Rollin's *Roman History*, Cook's *Voyages to the Pacific Ocean*, Robertson's *History of America*, Hume's *History of England* and Smollett's continuation of it. He also borrowed Fielding's and Johnson's *Works*, but at least one of these volumes was borrowed for his aunt so others may have been too.

Another borrower in this group, Henry Laidlaw (1801–1871), a coachman's son who became a Stipendiary Magistrate in Jamaica, appears to have borrowed books from Gray Library from the age of nine.³⁸³ He may have been encouraged by his older brother John (b. 1794) who was borrowing books from 1808. A similar pattern is likely in the case of John Ferme (1797–1883) who became a banker and whose saddler father was a regular

³⁸³ Initially it looked more likely that it was the father Henry borrowing in this case. However checking the borrowings in detail, including looking at them in sequence, revealed tell-tale evidence of a young boy's steadily improving handwriting.

borrower from Gray Library: indeed father and son regularly signed out books on the same day.³⁸⁴ In their choice of titles, these teenage boys were similar to other young borrowers at Gray Library, but it was the frequency and quantity of their borrowings that mark them out—possibly reflecting a greater interest in learning and application which helped them to succeed later in life. Equally it indicates the potential of such a library for promoting upward social mobility.

The importance of self-education reading to this group of society has attracted much attention from scholars, particularly Rose in his definitive work on the subject.³⁸⁵ There, among the broader British picture, he argues for a growth of autodidact culture in 18th century Scotland, drawing on evidence from subscription lists, the Cambuslang Revival, contemporary writings, and the *Old Statistical Account*.³⁸⁶ This impression is supported by studying the Gray Library borrowings in detail, but also those of Innerpeffer Library, which included weavers, shoemakers and masons among its borrowers.³⁸⁷ Admittedly both of these institutions were unusual free libraries, open to a wider range of society than the more restricted middling sort of subscription library as at Selkirk. But alongside the middling sort of subscription libraries in Scotland, there was an even greater number of societal libraries catering for predominantly working-class readers, as Chapter 2 observed, together with an additional unknown number of more informal reading societies for the working-class, as in the examples from the Paisley area. As a result, readers from this sector of society who wanted to self-educate themselves through reading improving books were increasingly well catered for, and such improving reading should not be seen as something restricted to the more privileged classes.

³⁸⁴ On 1810 June 6 (Wednesday) the whole family borrowed books: William Ferme borrowed the fourth volume of Henry's *History of Britain*, his wife Sarah borrowed the second volume of *Spectacle of Nature*, and their son John borrowed the third volume of Cook's *Voyages to the Pacific Ocean*.

³⁸⁵ J. Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes* (New Haven and London, 2001).

³⁸⁶ Rose, *The Intellectual Life*, particularly pp. 16–18 and 59–61.

³⁸⁷ Kaufman, *Libraries and their Users*, pp. 159–160. See also Houston, *Scottish Literacy*, pp. 174–176.

Educational reading applied to other levels of society, where they could afford to tap into it. Thus William Fairbairn (1789–1874), a farmer’s son originally from Kelso in Roxburghshire, who, fascinated by engineering, set out to teach himself the essentials of the subject and even went so far as to draw up a dedicated reading plan:

Monday Evenings	for	Arithmetic, Mensuration, &c.
Tuesday	“	Reading History and Poetry.
Wednesday	“	Recreation, Reading Novels and Romances.
Thursday	“	Mathematics.
Friday	“	Euclid, Trigonometry.
Saturday	“	Recreation and Sundries.
Sunday	“	Church, Milton, and Recreation. ³⁸⁸

Fairbairn’s background might have given him better opportunities for self-improvement than many lower-class readers. He did not attend university however and thus did not have the access enjoyed by university students and scholars to more restricted college libraries, some of whom left surviving borrowing records which can be examined.³⁸⁹

Reading for educational reasons was not confined to the young, and an older reader who used books in a similar way was George Ridpath, much of whose reading was researched, often involving his favoured subject of history, very much in a studious and even antiquarian tradition. Topics that he researched included the history of the Saxon kings, the life of Mary Queen of Scots, and the history of France. At one point he considered making a new corrected translation of Buchanan’s *History* but abandoned this, concluding that ‘It would require an immense time and a supply of books that it is impossible for me in my present situation to procure.’³⁹⁰ Another short-lived scheme was his plan to write an ‘Essay on Taste, for the prize’ with his main motivation being ‘the prospect of making some little gain, that might help me in the project of clearing my debts’.³⁹¹ Not all schemes

³⁸⁸ Pole, *The Life of Sir William Fairbairn, Bart.*, p. 73.

³⁸⁹ For example Finlayson, ‘Thomas Carlyle’s borrowings from Edinburgh University Library 1819–1820’.

³⁹⁰ *Diary of George Ridpath*, 1761 January 30, p. 368; and *Diary of George Ridpath*, 1761 March 4, p. 372 (abbreviated to *DGR* in subsequent footnotes).

³⁹¹ *DGR*, 1756 March 30, p. 61. This prize may have been offered by the Select Society of Edinburgh, or one of the bodies which grew out of it—R.L. Emerson, ‘The social composition of enlightened Scotland: the Select society of Edinburgh, 1754–1764’, *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, Vol. 114 (1973), pp. 291–329.

were abandoned though, and one that Ridpath continued was a history of Berwick-upon-Tweed which became his posthumously-published history of the Borders.³⁹² Research for this started by copying relevant extracts from historians such as Buchanan and Abercromby, before checking historical records in local archives.³⁹³ When the surviving diary finished in 1761, Ridpath was still working on this project, reading and copying relevant extracts from historians such as Camden and Spottiswoode.³⁹⁴

Reading for improvement occurred throughout the period, and, as Chapter 4 noted, dominated the books stocked by subscription libraries and similar institutions. Indeed, the borrowings of Gray Library in the late 18th and early 19th centuries can be largely categorised as improvement, with readers borrowing large numbers of histories and biographies, and voyages and travels, both popular informative subjects of the time. Although only some of the titles borrowed were noted Enlightenment texts—such as Hume’s *History of England*—such self-education through reading was an extension of broad Enlightenment thinking and ideas, namely the use of books to inform and educate about the wider world and how it worked. This is a very different way of looking at dissemination of Enlightenment thinking from the top-down approach of focusing on key books pursued by Sher and Towsey, the former identifying key Enlightenment texts and the relationship between their authors and publishers, the latter searching for such books in subscription library catalogues and borrowing records.³⁹⁵ Indeed the bottom-up approach suggests that an Enlightenment approach may have been much more widespread in Scotland than has been hitherto recognised.

³⁹² G. Ridpath, *The Border History of England and Scotland* (London, 1776).

³⁹³ Ridpath had mixed success when he went to Berwick-upon-Tweed in May 1761, finding that the ‘Town Archives’ were no longer in the hands of the Town Clerk, but under the control of a Recorder and committee, and he was not allowed to view them.

³⁹⁴ *DGR*, 1761 June 19, p. p. 389; and *DGR*, 1761 May 28, p. 385.

³⁹⁵ Sher, *The Enlightenment and the Book*; Towsey, ‘All Partners may be Enlightened and Improved by Reading them’; and Towsey, ‘Reading the Scottish Enlightenment’.

Ridpath and the Haddington youngsters were fortunate to have good access to books through local libraries.³⁹⁶ The Haddington residents were unusually lucky to have such a good free public library in their midst from so early in the 18th century. Fortunately for other eager readers, libraries—including working-class ones—spread throughout Scotland during the late 18th and early 19th centuries, improving the reading opportunities for more of the population, and so Ridpath and the Gray Library examples should not be viewed as atypical in this context. The educational qualities of books were probably particularly valued by a number of library committees in the books they chose to stock, being seen as highly suitable, particularly for younger readers. This raises the question of the extent to which people, including young readers, were free to make their own choices when borrowing, or how much they were following convention.

The continued importance of educational reading, both at Gray Library and elsewhere, is an important feature of Scottish reading habits, and a further manifestation of the growing role of improvement reading during this the period. As Chapter 4 discussed, improvement books were becoming more significant for readers, as seen in evidence from libraries, in books available to buy on the market, and in the evidence left by individual readers. The power of books to expand the mind, for both young and old alike, should not be underestimated, and was something that Scots at this time were all too willing to harness.

Reading for work-related reasons

Just as educational reading could be particularly significant during childhood, the same can be said of work-related reading during adulthood, particularly for more studious occupations. This was not always the case though. Ridpath, for example, is notable as a minister who does not appear to have read many religious books, particularly about church history and theological debate. He would presumably have acquainted himself with them sufficiently well to be able to construct his weekly sermons, and indeed frequently refers in

³⁹⁶ Ridpath used the nearby Kelso Public Library and the private collections of friends and neighbours.

his diary to preparing for his sermons, which could conceal relevant theological reading.³⁹⁷ However, beyond that, it looks as though publications on the subject had little appeal for him—in marked contrast to the history and classics books with which he filled his days reading. This raises the issue of the balance between work-related and other forms of reading. Qualitative evidence such as Ridpath's is rare enough, but quantitative evidence for single readers is more so. An unusual example of the latter is the detailed and lengthy reading record between 1790 and 1829 of Robert Hamilton, political economist and Professor of Mathematics in Marischal College, Aberdeen. This record was discussed in detail in Chapter 4. Only 15% of Hamilton's recorded reading choices were mathematics, economics, politics or science books. Far more were of history, voyages and travels, and geography, or novels.³⁹⁸ It is possible that both Hamilton and Ridpath under-recorded their work-related reading, preferring to list the books that they chose to read for pleasure, although this seems less likely for Hamilton, since he recorded work-related books in some number. Ridpath, however, may well have under-recorded work-related books since he fails to mention them at all.

Looking at other ministers, and in particular those borrowing books from Gray Library, the impression is that work-related reading was important to most of them. Although as the decades rolled on, religious books were increasingly outnumbered in the Gray Library borrowings by others, they continued to appeal to religious scholars, both trainee and fully qualified ministers. Indeed the borrowers of such books accounted for ministers in nine of East Lothian's 27 parishes. Chapter 6 further explores the private collections of books that ministers had in their homes in Dumfriesshire, including the religious texts they owned, further emphasizing the necessary link between work and reading. Ridpath may have been unusual among ministers in devoting so little of his time, if any, to religious reading.

³⁹⁷ For example *DGR*, 1756 June 5, p. 73: 'Robert Turnbull and his niece left us about 11. Afterwards prepared for tomorrow (Sunday)'.

³⁹⁸ See also Chapter 6 for a comparison of the books Hamilton owned with those he read, providing further insight into the work-recreation balance. In addition Chapter 6 considers the work-related books revealed by Dumfriesshire after-death inventories.

Another group of readers who had reason to read for occupational reasons were legal professionals. Occasionally they appear in the Gray Library records, being the main borrowers of the library's small collection of legal volumes. For example Erskine's *Institutes of the Laws of Scotland* (1773) was borrowed by Sheriff-Clerk Alexander Fraser, Writers James Templeton and David Rothead, and Sheriff-Substitute Thomas Fairbairn; indeed the latter two each borrowed this three times, possibly suggesting that they were using it professionally. Burn's *The Justice of the Peace and Parish Officer* (1772) was also borrowed by David Rothead and Thomas Fairbairn. Another example of work-related borrowing was David Jack, teacher of Mathematics in Edinburgh who in June 1740 borrowed Rami's *Arithmetica et Geometria* (1599) and Sacra-bosco's *Sphaera* (1639).³⁹⁹ Generally such borrowers borrowed a wider range of other books as well, and the overall balance of their borrowing should be regarded as either recreational or some kind of improving reading, rather than solely related to their occupations.

Admittedly the library's collection of legal books was modest, and it is likely that some of Haddington's legal professionals already had access to suitable texts in their own private collections, as explored in Chapter 6. However another possible explanation is that work-related reading took up only a fraction of their time, a theory supported by James Boswell's day-to-day journal. Boswell, (1740–1795), worked as an advocate in Edinburgh periodically, and his journals contain numerous references to reading.⁴⁰⁰ Occasionally he records reading a legal text, for example trying to find a passage which he had already read in Hawkins's *Pleas of the Crown* and reading late at night 'on the subject of Dr Memis's cause'.⁴⁰¹ Generally, though, his reading references mention other reading material, of all other subjects, and the overriding impression is that recreational reading took up far more of his reading time.

³⁹⁹ As an outside borrower David Jack would have needed special permission to borrow these books, though perhaps he was visiting Haddington for a time.

⁴⁰⁰ H.M. Milne, *Boswell's Edinburgh Journals 1767–1786* (Edinburgh, 2001).

⁴⁰¹ Milne, *Boswell's Edinburgh Journals*, p. 246, 1776 February 26, and p. 275, 1776 November 27.

One form of occupational reading not represented at all in the Gray Library borrowing records is the reading of agricultural publications. Holmes has described the growth of agricultural books in this period in Scotland, indeed their ‘abundance’ by 1795.⁴⁰² Subscription lists for agricultural books reveal that their purchasers came from a range of occupational groups, although the agricultural community made up the largest part.⁴⁰³ Yet agricultural books are largely invisible in the records of reading which have been found in the course of this research, although that is at least partly due to the type of readers who left records of reading, with few such records from rural communities. Chapter 6 examines the books found in people’s houses, including farmers in rural Dumfriesshire. Even there agricultural books are rarely found. If these farmers were reading agricultural books then they must have been accessing them via other means, perhaps borrowing them from local landowners, or from more specialist libraries, through local agricultural societies, or even owning copies of the agricultural titles themselves.

One Scottish library which did cater for readers wanting to read agricultural publications was the Selkirk Subscription Library. As seen in Chapter 4, this was in many respects a typical subscription library, with a particular emphasis on provision of novels and self-educating works. But agricultural publications were also borrowed here, unsurprisingly for a library whose subscribers, including many farmers, largely came from the extensive rural community around Selkirk.⁴⁰⁴ The *Farmer’s Magazine* was a particularly popular agricultural title at the Selkirk library, accounting for over a third of the agricultural borrowings.⁴⁰⁵ Other agricultural publications borrowed included general works on husbandry, such as Sinclair’s, as well as more specific texts such as Rennie’s essays on moss, Hogg’s *Shepherd’s Guide*, and Mackenzie’s treatise on sheep. The vast majority of

⁴⁰² H. Holmes, ‘The circulation of Scottish agricultural books during the eighteenth century’, *Agricultural History Review*, Vol. 54 (2006), pp. 45–78, particularly p. 47.

⁴⁰³ Holmes, ‘Circulation of Scottish agricultural books’, pp. 74, 76.

⁴⁰⁴ Haddington was also surrounded by extensive farming country, but Gray Library’s borrowing facility was, with only a few exceptions, restricted to residents of the burgh.

⁴⁰⁵ The *Farmer’s Magazine* also appears in the 1803 stock list of Peterhead bookseller John Dallachy, suggesting that it was bought by some of its readers, not just borrowed.

the agricultural borrowers were either farmers or landowners, but other agricultural borrowers included three local parish ministers, and a Selkirk lawyer.

There appear to have been no specialist legal texts of interest to lawyers held at the Selkirk library, unlike Gray Library, and it was not based upon a dedicated religious collection to boost its appeal to ministers. However, the Selkirk collection did include practical books for ministers, such as Campbell's book on pulpit eloquence, which was borrowed by ministers from Selkirk and nearby parishes. Such borrowings constituted only a tiny fraction of the library's total borrowings, as was also the case with the agricultural publications. Like subscription libraries in general, the Selkirk library catered mainly for recreational and improving reading rather than work-related, and—as observed earlier—it is likely that many professionals would already have owned some of the work-related books that they had reason to read.

Reading for entertainment

Entertainment publications became increasingly important in the print market and in Scottish people's reading habits in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. To an extent self-education reading can be categorised as a form of recreational reading, particularly if it was done out of choice rather than obligation. However this section of the chapter focuses on the REI entertainment category i.e. novels, plays, poetry and similar.

Reading for entertainment occurred in varying degrees from the very start of the period. This includes the ever informative example of Ridpath who, whilst his research reading can be categorised as self-educating and improvement, spent even more time reading and rereading his favourite subjects of history and classics for pure pleasure. He even indulged in some novels including Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* and Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, seemingly as much to see what all the fuss was about as a personal desire to read the

work.⁴⁰⁶ Novel reading however was rare for Ridpath, greatly outnumbered by history and classics reading. By contrast, half a century later, Hamilton was devouring novels at a fervent pace, working through over 100 titles between the 1790s and 1820s, including Scott's Waverley novels from 1815.

It would be unwise to capture the development in Scottish novel reading simply using these two examples alone, since both had their specific tastes and interests. Studying a larger group of readers over a long time would have been better, but there are no appropriate Scottish records. The lengthy Gray Library borrowings show increased borrowings of novels, poetry and plays later in the period, not least the works of Fielding (bought 1776) and Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (bought 1808). However the library's stock of novels was relatively low, possibly reflecting a wish to invest in less frivolous titles.⁴⁰⁷ One area where Gray Library's records are useful as a potential guide to recreational reading is a difference in borrowing patterns revealed between male and female borrowers. The former seem to have been more likely to borrow history books and books of voyages and travels, whereas the latter preferred works of fiction, particularly favouring the writings of Fielding and Johnson, as well as poetry by Scott, Burns and Ossian. To an extent this fits with conventional critical stereotypes.⁴⁰⁸ However many titles were borrowed by both genders, including the most popular books of all, both fiction and non-fiction.⁴⁰⁹ Likewise, the Selkirk Subscription Library records reveal that the almost entirely

⁴⁰⁶ *DGR*, 1760 July 8, p. 326; *DGR*, 1760 August 12, p. 331.

⁴⁰⁷ Gray, *A short history of Haddington*, p. 138 comments that the library's regulations prevented it from stocking fiction. No such regulation has been traced in the early records and even from the 18th century fiction was stocked, albeit in small numbers, including Fielding's *Tom Jones*.

⁴⁰⁸ Pearson, *Women's reading in Britain 1750–1835*; and St Clair, *Reading nation*, pp. 280–283. However one study of a 1770s Warwick circulating library suggests that men may have borrowed novels as much as women—see Fergus, 'Customers of Samuel Clay's Circulating Library and Bookshop', p. 179.

⁴⁰⁹ Just twenty core titles accounted for half of all borrowings, some borrowed heavily throughout the whole period (Rollin's *History*), some earlier (the *Universal History* volumes), and others later (Fielding's *Works* in the 1770s–1810s and *Beauties of Scotland* in the 1800s–1810s). Such heavy borrowing of a small number of titles raises questions about how the library room was organised. Were the most popular titles shelved separately from the 1000+ other titles for the librarian's convenience?

male subscribers there were greatly interested in reading the latest novels, albeit usually alongside other works.

Some Scots would not have read recreationally of course, either uninterested in the activity, or unable to access the books to read, perhaps lacking a good library nearby, or lacking the time required to fetch and read the books. Others would have read in secret, fitting their reading around other activities and keeping it from the disapproving gaze of friends and relatives. Still others would have been more fortunate, like the young readers at Haddington being taken to the library by their parents, and encouraged to read the latest books, and not just those of educational or improving merit. In terms of entertainment reading, those with access to a circulating library would have been particularly fortunate, able to access the latest novels and similar works, even if it meant trudging in wind and rain several miles at night to a neighbouring town to exchange books there.⁴¹⁰ Only one Scottish circulating library from this period has left any borrowing records: Robert Chambers' library in Edinburgh for 1828.⁴¹¹ Unfortunately these borrowings are difficult to analyse due to the cryptic abbreviations frequently used to record the items borrowed. However a contemporary catalogue of this library is full of the typical stock of such libraries and its borrowing records reveal that the library catered for customers both in Edinburgh and further afield. Some customers even obtained their books by post, albeit at an extra cost which would have put such long-distance borrowing beyond many people.⁴¹²

Entertainment reading at this period in Scotland can be difficult to trace in the records, often concealed, or with evidence sometimes skewing the picture, as at Gray Library. Nevertheless the evidence for it that does survive—for example the changing stock of

⁴¹⁰ Campbell, *Memoirs of Charles Campbell*, p. 3. According to the autobiography Campbell was born the son of a cotton mill warehouseman in 1793 in Tarbert, Argyllshire but lived from infancy in Johnstone, Renfrewshire.

⁴¹¹ NLS MS Dep.341/413, Library Ledger, Chambers Circulating Library (1828).

⁴¹² R. Chambers, *Catalogue of Robert Chambers' circulating library* (Edinburgh, 1829). For postal borrowings the ledger includes instructions on how to deliver the books, for example 'per Perth Waterloo Coach To be given to the Newburgh Postboy at Cross gates Glenfarg'—NLS MS Dep. 341/413 p. 22. Of course such postal delivery added to the cost of borrowing and it would have been cheaper to borrow in person.

booksellers who can be traced, reading lists kept by individual readers, and the Selkirk Subscription Library borrowing records—suggests that entertainment reading was of growing interest to Scottish readers, and a very significant topic by the end of the period.

Choosing what to read

The question arises how people chose their books. At the start of the period, Ridpath followed review journals, seeking to read the recommended books through friends or his local library.⁴¹³ Review journals were new at the time and Ridpath shows how they reached some of the most eager readers, even in provincial Scotland.⁴¹⁴ At the end of the period, the letters of Mrs Grant show a similar dependence on review journals such as the *Edinburgh Review* and the *Quarterly Review*. She also took on the role of recommending books to friends and family, responding to pleas for suggestions of books to read, both individually and in a family setting, as in this example from 1819:

One of my vexations at this letter not reaching you sooner is, that I have not sent in time the wished-for account of books, that would be such an amusement for the winter evenings as all members of the family might be entertained by. I take it for granted that you mean such as would amuse and instruct at the same time; for as to books of devotion, I am sure I am not fit to lead your choice. Assuming this to be the case, I think you would all (even though you had once read them before) be much pleased with Mrs Carter's Letters, which need no eulogium from me, being quite equal to recommend themselves. Mrs Brunton's *Discipline*, which I think a much better book than her *Self-Control*, and which, near the conclusion, delineates Highland life very truly, might be admitted. Voyages and Travels, such as Mungo Park's and some late travels in South Africa, are very good reading for young persons of

⁴¹³ References to the review journals are numerous throughout the diary, but see for example *DGR*, 1755 June 13, p. 14.

⁴¹⁴ Ridpath read *Edinburgh Review* (1755–1756) soon after publication, *Critical Review* (founded 1756), from 1759, and *Monthly Review* (founded 1749) from 1755.

active and excursive minds. They keep up an unwearied attention, and have all the vivid interest of a novel without its hazards. Crabbe's new Tales are excellent; much better reading for young people than the first. Among late voyages, I find none so entertaining and so unexceptionable as Macleod's narrative of the shipwreck of the *Alceste*, which includes some very interesting particulars of the natives of Loo Choo. Mackenzie's works, the *Mirror* and *Lounger*, contain some good reading for young people. Novels - you will in vain endeavour to keep from them; these are so diffused, and their contents so incorporated with general conversation, that entirely debarring them would only increase the desire for them. The safest alternative is to let them read the best, and all inferior trash of that kind will be despised. The good sense, good felling, and knowledge of nature in Scott's novels make them good reading for any one, and give a higher idea of works of fiction than any others I know. After all, there is no period of time in which tales and parables have not been the food of unoccupied minds in one shape or other; and all that we can do is purify and exalt that taste which we cannot control. I have seen one, and but one, of Mrs Taylor of Ongar's Tales, which I liked much. It is called *Display*.⁴¹⁵

This recorded demand for novels among the youngsters, and how much they permeated contemporary conversation, is worth noting, and attests to their great popularity at this time, even if elders like Mrs Grant sometimes tried to steer youngsters towards more worthy examples of the genre. Such recommendations are particularly informative because Mrs Grant explained her reasoning, including in this case tips on how best to handle the wishes of young people to read novels, steering them towards better-written ones. It is likely that other enthusiastic readers would seek the advice of a trusted knowledgeable friend. For many readers, choices would be limited to what they could get hold of, as demonstrated by

⁴¹⁵ Grant, *Mrs Grant of Laggan*, Vol. II, pp. 230–231.

the many younger readers who started reading the books available in the family home.⁴¹⁶ Even with a good library, choices might be limited, if the preferred book were unavailable on the day of the library visit, even if in stock. This can be interpreted at Gray Library, in the borrowing of sequential volumes. Readers might not always get the next volume in turn, particularly for the most popular books. For example between December 1815 and April 1816, demand for Forsyth's five-volume *Beauties of Scotland* was so high, borrowed by seven different people, that several borrowed volumes out of sequence: George Cunningham took the first, third, second, fifth, and fourth volumes; James Fairbairn took the first and fourth; and James Knox took the first, second, and fifth. Admittedly this particular title did not have to be read in sequence to fully appreciate it, since each volume covered a different part of Scotland. As might be expected, the volume covering East Lothian was the most popular with Gray Library borrowers.⁴¹⁷ However other borrowers did read this title in sequence, suggesting that doing so was the norm. Borrowing books out of sequence was not unique to Gray Library of course. In 1811, Dundee grocer Thomas Handyside Baxter noted in his diary that he 'could not get the Book I wanted' from the library so instead 'took out the Annals of Geo the 1st its an old fashioned like Book and am afraid won't get thro' it'.⁴¹⁸

The issue of availability and how much of an impact this had on choice raises the question of which books people might be more likely to borrow, and which they already owned at home. This question is probed more thoroughly in Chapter 6, where books owned at home are examined in detail. However, a working theory based on the library borrowing records studied in this and the previous chapter is that people (particularly professionals) were more likely to own work-related books than to borrow them; likewise novels were more

⁴¹⁶ See Chapters 2 and 3 for discussions of childhood reading, including how the children accessed the books and the books they read as a result.

⁴¹⁷ Although not overwhelming so, with most borrowers reading the other volumes too.

⁴¹⁸ Dundee University Archives, MS184/1/1, Thomas Handyside Baxter diary, 25 Jun. 1811. Baxter probably borrowed books from Dundee Library (subscription), a companion institution to the Exchange Coffee Room which he visited daily.

likely to be borrowed than owned; and most people probably owned a copy of the Bible, and possibly other devotional works of interest.

If studying individual readers in depth, it is also possible to detect changes in the books they chose to read over time. An example of this is Hamilton's growing appreciation for novels, both the older 18th century titles and Scott's *Waverley* novels from 1815 onwards. Whereas, in some of his reading, Ridpath chose to follow contemporary affairs. Between 1755 and 1759 he followed newspaper reports about events in Canada, using maps copied from magazines and books to chart what was happening in Quebec.⁴¹⁹ Similarly in 1759, the *Weekly Chronicle*'s account of Halley's comet prompted Ridpath to look first 'to Sir Isaac and to Voltaire's *Newton* about comets' before searching by telescope for the comet over the following week.⁴²⁰

Reasons for reading could vary, as the above examples show. Sometimes availability would be key, as in the Baxter example, where a disappointed library borrower went home with something they had not set out seeking to borrow. More commonly, though, it is likely that Scottish readers' personal tastes could direct their reading, allowing them to pursue specific topics of interest, or to seek out and read eagerly-sought titles.

Religious and devotional reading

If there was a broad shift towards more extensive and predominantly recreational reading that raises the question of where religion fitted in and whether religious reading of the old-fashioned intensive style was still important? For some readers at least, if contemporary accounts are to be believed, it was. One anonymous autobiographer recalled his predominantly religious youthful reading in the 1820s when he 'became serious, read only the Bible and religious books', a pattern that, according to his memoirs, seems to have

⁴¹⁹ *DGR*, 1759 September 17, p. 270.

⁴²⁰ *DGR*, 1759 May 18, pp. 247–248.

continued throughout the rest of his life.⁴²¹ Another memoir that recalls intensive religious reading early in the 19th century is that of Robert ‘Daddy’ Flockhart (1778–1857), who was converted to the Baptist faith while serving in the army and subsequently preached to passers-by outside St Giles in Edinburgh. In his case, there was a clear link between religious reading and his later actions, with Flockhart writing about how he discovered the Bible and read it fervently.⁴²² Flockhart came from eastern Scotland, whereas there were different religious inheritances on the west coast, in the area around Glasgow, as discussed by Landsmen.⁴²³ Unfortunately, there is not enough surviving evidence to investigate this aspect of Scottish reading habits fully. It is likely that communal influences would have played a part in religious reading in such evangelical communities, and intensive reading may well have persisted more within such communities than elsewhere. For other readers, religious reading may have been more of a private matter, and one that increasingly took its place alongside secular reading as time went on.

At Haddington’s Gray Library, a significant number of readers continued to borrow religious books later in the period, although usually alongside at least one secular title reflecting wider interests. One such borrower was John Shirreff, possibly the elderly farmer of nearby Mungoswells farm.⁴²⁴ Between November 1815 and March 1816 Shirreff borrowed Blair’s *Sermons*, Walker’s *Sermons*, Black’s *Sermons*, Campbell’s *On Miracles*, and Porteous’s *Lectures on Matthew*. Alongside these he worked through multiple volumes of Hume’s *History of England*. Intriguingly Innerpeffray Library’s borrowing records, although not analysed as fully as those of Gray Library, show an even greater presence of religious borrowing in the early years of the 19th century—at least 40% in 1810 of the Innerpeffray borrowings were religious works, compared with just 7%

⁴²¹ Anonymous, *Autobiography of a Scotch Lad*, p. 18.

⁴²² Flockhart, *The Street Preacher*, pp. 59 onwards.

⁴²³ For example Landsmen, ‘Presbyterians and Provincial Society’; and Landsmen, ‘Evangelists and Their Hearers’.

⁴²⁴ Martine, *Reminiscences and notices of the parishes of the county of Haddington*, p. 101. Although Mungoswells lies in Haddington parish the Shirreff family grave is in neighbouring Prestonkirk parish—*Prestonkirk Churchyard East Lothian: A Record* (Prestonkirk, 1998), p. 18.

history books, the reverse of Gray Library's borrowings at the same time.⁴²⁵ The reason for this difference is unclear. Innerpeffray Library attracted a mix of working-class and middling sort readers, but so did Gray Library, so a difference of readers along class lines cannot of itself explain the anomaly. It might have been the result of different library policies, with possibly fewer history titles bought at Innerpeffray, although, as Gray Library showed, a small number of popular titles could cater for most readers. It might equally reflect different local reading tastes, including a difference between urban and rural reading habits, albeit still with potentially a 'reading revolution', but one taking place at a slower rate. Despite the significant persistence of religious borrowing at Innerpeffray, religious reading is generally under-represented in library borrowing records, and it is thus impossible to use library borrowing records to determine its relative extent.

The possibility of local differences in reading tastes challenges too rigid an idea of a uniform society and attitudes to reading. It is also possible that there was variation along class and occupational lines, as in the example from the *Old Statistical Account* where a 1790s Dumfriesshire parish minister observed that farmers were reading informative works whereas 'the vulgar read almost nothing but books on religious subjects'.⁴²⁶ Accounts from later in the period typically mention working-class readers reading religious texts such as Boston's *Fourfold State* and Howie's *Scots Worthies*.⁴²⁷ Generally, though, evidence of religious reading later is undertaken alongside secular reading. As argued in Chapter 4 it is likely there was a relative decline in the proportion of religious reading among reading in general, but not necessarily a decline in absolute terms. Indeed, with the growth of religious publishing in the Glasgow area, religious reading may even have grown over time, albeit outnumbered by other more secular subjects.

⁴²⁵ These percentages are based on studying the Innerpeffray Library borrowing registers held at Innerpeffray Library.

⁴²⁶ OSA, Vol. 4, p. 524.

⁴²⁷ For example Anonymous, *Autobiography of a Scotch Lad*, pp. 18–19; Bain, *Autobiography*, pp. 4, 8; Butler, *Narrative of the Life and Travels of Serjeant B___*, p. 14; Flockhart, *The Street Preacher*, pp. 59 onwards; Anonymous, 'Life of a Handloom Weaver', p. 1; Anonymous, 'The Life of a Journeyman Baker', p. 3; Robertson, *Hugh Miller*, p. 27; Paterson, *Autobiographical Reminiscences*, pp. 54–55; and Somerville, *The Autobiography of a Working Man*, pp. 41, 55 and 57.

While there may have been variation within society later in the period, there were also other exceptions to the broad chronological shift from intensive to extensive reading. For example, as noted earlier, Ridpath recorded a surprisingly small amount of religious reading in his daily diary, despite being a Church of Scotland parish minister. He may still read devotionally, but did not record the activity in his diary. By contrast Professor Robert Hamilton towards the end of the period recorded religious books throughout his reading list, though in a minority, with religion fitting alongside his wider reading. His reading list also hints at another potential role for religious reading. Shortly before he died, Hamilton was reading Thomas Wright's *Farewell to time*, a work full of devotional exercises 'to be used by the sick and by those who minister to them'. Did Hamilton know that he was soon to die and was reading this to provide comfort in his final days? If so, he was still reading more widely even then. The next and final title in his list is 'Zilla a Jewish Tale', a 4-volume novel, albeit one with more than a hint of religion to it.

If anything, all of the above examples highlight that there are always exceptions to any general rule and that trends could be complex. For example, Ridpath was clearly reading in an extensive style at the beginning of the period studied, reading a wide range of books throughout the day and recording little evidence of any form of intensive reading. At the end of the period, many eager readers may have been reading a wide range of texts extensively but there were still some who were reading in an intensive religious way. Generally, though, it is likely that many readers by the end of the period were reading in a combination of styles and for a variety of reasons, changing their reading patterns to suit their reasons for reading and their changing circumstances.

Conclusions

Broadly speaking Engelsing's 'reading revolution' appears to apply to Scotland in this period. While readers were more likely to read religious texts in an intensive way in the middle of the 18th century, the picture later on was different, with an increasing diversity of

books read, and a greater volume as well. There were always exceptions of course, for intensive religious reading continued through to the early 19th century. Overall, though, intensive religious reading declined, at least in relative terms, and most readers were more likely to be reading a more varied mix of books by the end of the period.

Probing the different reasons for reading and the reading practices arising from them expands the picture, illustrating the diversity of reading practices present in Scotland, both throughout society, and in the reading patterns of individual readers. Each of these reasons would have varied in importance throughout individual lives: children reading more for education while young, possibly moving on to a need to read for work reasons, and a wish to read for entertainment. In many cases there would have been a mix of reasons for reading present together throughout life, all represented by a diverse form of extensive reading. Satisfying such reasons relied on an adequate supply of books, and sufficient time to read them. But for those individuals fortunate enough to have such facilities, reading could be complex indeed, extending far beyond a core collection of books at home.

The continued importance of self-education reading throughout the period, not just for the young but all ages, is reflected in the growing evidence of improvement reading. Indeed, the Gray Library evidence shows how such reading could have an important role to play in the lives of youngsters eager to educate themselves and move up in the world. Entertainment reading had become very significant by the end of the period: under-represented at Gray Library, but showing clearly in the Selkirk borrowings, and in the records kept by individual readers. The third category of the REI classification system, religion, is more problematic. Chapter 3 discussed how religious reading was under-recorded in diaries and similar sources, but was nevertheless important in Scottish society, particularly on Sundays where communal family reading of the Bible could take place. Likewise Chapter 4 showed that while there may have been a decline over time in relative terms of religious reading, it continued to have a role to play in Scottish society, even in the

lives of people reading far more widely by the end of the period such as William Lyon Mackenzie. Local variation may also have been a factor in the extent of religious reading, with varying concentrations throughout Scotland, reflecting the different religious inheritances, for example a greater fervour in the area around Glasgow. Significantly, there are also suggestions of variation along class and occupational lines, supported by the popular successes of religious titles such as *Scots Worthies*. Nevertheless, it is still likely that such groups too were moving towards a more extensive style of reading, albeit possibly at a different pace from other readers.

Such potential variation in the extent of religious reading and the shift towards an extensive style of reading raises the wider question of what kind of person was being reflected in the evidence for reading practices. Much of the surviving evidence is from the middling sort and skilled working-class men, young and old. It is rarer to find evidence of female readers, Gray Library being a notable exception. Using that library's borrowing registers it is possible to compare the reading patterns of male and female borrowers given the same stock of books to draw on. Doing this shows male readers favouring self-education works, and female readers favouring entertainment such as fiction and poetry and plays. While this fits with conventional stereotypes, it would be wrong to deduce too much from this comparison. Entertainment reading was popular with male readers too, as subscription and circulating library records show, and likewise some female readers read to self-educate, as in the well-known example of the self-taught Mary Somerville.

There was undoubtedly local variation, but it is nevertheless still reasonable to make an overall assessment of the picture of reading habits in Scotland at this time, based on the broad trends that can be detected in the surviving evidence. From this we can conclude that by the end of the period the picture was one of diverse but widespread reading practices in Scotland. This was the case both at the level of groups of readers, for example members of a library and their cumulative borrowing patterns, and at the level of individual readers,

where an individual reader might read an improvement book one minute, an entertainment book at another time, and a religious text on another occasion.

Chapter 6: Book ownership and reading

Book ownership in this era in Scotland has been little explored by past historians of reading, either in terms of estimating its extent or considering its significance for reading habits.⁴²⁸ In part, this shortfall may be due to doubts about how much book ownership can be practically measured, most forcibly expressed by Houston.⁴²⁹ Another possible reason though, and arguably a stronger case for little studying this aspect of reading history, is uncertainty about how much people actually read the books they owned.⁴³⁰

Yet books owned by people played an important part in Scottish reading opportunities, not just those of their owners but also of their wider social networks, given the widespread evidence throughout society of informal lending of books among friends and neighbours. Indeed the early reading experiences of a number of individuals typically focused around the books in the family home. Their presence often seems to have been the catalyst for their readers to read widely throughout their lives. In addition Chapter 5 raised the question of whether people would be more likely to own certain books, for example key religious texts or work-related titles, than to borrow them.

This chapter, therefore, tackles book ownership to clarify its relationship with reading. The first challenge is to assess how widespread book ownership was throughout Scottish society, or whether this can be measured at all. The sources and methods used by book historians in other countries will be drawn upon to explore book ownership anew in a Scottish context, based around a detailed local case study of after-death inventories. This section is followed by a second local case study examining detailed records of a bookseller and his customers, allowing a large-scale study of customer purchasing to compare and contrast with the inventory picture. Throughout both sections the underlying question

⁴²⁸ Crawford, for example, only briefly comments on a handful of subscription lists and a single will, before moving on to consider other aspects of reading history more fully—Crawford, ‘Reading and book use in 18th-century Scotland’, pp. 24–28.

⁴²⁹ Houston, *Scottish Literacy*, pp. 163–171.

⁴³⁰ Houston, *Scottish Literacy*, p. 173.

remains how much people actually read the books they owned, and evidence for exploring this survives and is assessed in the third section.

Uncovering book ownership

Past attempts to measure book ownership in Scotland have tended to focus on printed lists of subscribers, people who placed advance orders for new publications and were thus included in lists of names printed inside some books.⁴³¹ The detail recorded about the subscribers varies but occasionally included occupation, allowing some assessment of the range of subscribers to a particular title and a measure of its reach throughout society. For example Laslett studied the subscribers to a religious book *Prima Media, or First, Middle and Last Things*, printed in Glasgow in the 1750s.⁴³² To his surprise, he found a high proportion of working-class subscribers—over a third being weavers, with colliers, masons, smiths, shoemakers and wrights present as well. From this, he argued for a high degree of literacy and book ownership reaching further than the leisured classes alone. Yet subscription lists provide only a rough guide to book ownership, since most books were not sold in this way and knowing that an individual bought one book is little guide to their wider buying practices.⁴³³ Moreover subscription lists with the level of detail found by Laslett are relatively rare.⁴³⁴

Given such limitations, more comprehensive records of book ownership are appealing, particularly lists that record all books owned by individuals. A number of such lists can be

⁴³¹ See for example Crawford, 'Reading and book use', pp. 24–26. Zachs, *The First John Murray*, pp. 68–70 describes the process of publishing by subscription. Relevant studies are Jones, 'Book owners in Eighteenth century Scotland', pp. 33–35; and Laslett, 'Scottish weavers, cobblers and miners', pp. 7–15.

⁴³² Laslett, 'Scottish weavers, cobblers and miners', pp. 7–15.

⁴³³ Feather, *The Provincial Book Trade in Eighteenth-Century England*, pp. 44–68 describes the variety of ways in which books were distributed through the provincial book trade, including selling by subscription.

⁴³⁴ For other discussions of subscription lists see Crawford, 'Reading and book use in 18th-century Scotland', p. 26; Jones, 'Book owners in Eighteenth century Scotland'; and M.F. Suarez, 'The Production and Consumption of the Eighteenth-Century Poetic Miscellany', in I. Rivers (ed.), *Books and their Readers in Eighteenth-Century England: New Essays* (London, 2001), pp. 217–251.

found among private estate papers in local and national archives, albeit generally restricted to the landed and aristocratic families, and relatively small in number across the whole of Scotland.⁴³⁵ An alternative source, covering a broader range of society, is after-death inventories, lists of goods drawn up after their owners died. Such records have been used extensively by historians of reading elsewhere in Europe and America to assess the extent of book ownership in more detail.⁴³⁶ Yet in Scotland such records have been generally ignored by historians for this purpose. One historian who used after-death inventories in the context of reading history is Houston, but he viewed them negatively, based on his own survey of wills and inventories for Lasswade in Midlothian 1660–1760 and on Shaw’s study of the Highlands and Islands before 1750.⁴³⁷ In both cases, books tended to belong to professional and wealthier classes, although the main impression from Houston is of their scarcity: just 6 of the 95 Lasswade wills and inventories mentioned books.⁴³⁸ Houston focused on the period before 1760, and more recent research suggests that book listings became more common in Scottish inventories in the later period. Martin, for example, in studying the material culture of the 18th century inhabitants of Cupar, Fife, found lists of books in a third of the inventories.⁴³⁹ More recently Barrie and the author checked inventories for town dwellers throughout Angus, particularly in the early 19th century, and found a similar rate of book listings.⁴⁴⁰

⁴³⁵ Many such lists can be located using the computerised catalogue by searching for appropriate keywords such as ‘books’ and ‘inventory’ or ‘list’.

⁴³⁶ Houston, *Scottish Literacy*, p. 171 cites examples from around Europe but mainly from the 16th and 17th centuries. Inventory studies of books from the 18th and 19th centuries include Chartier, *The Cultural Uses of Print*, pp. 184–189; de Kruif, ‘Classes of readers’, pp. 423–452; Cárcel, ‘La posesión del libro en la Cataluña del Antiguo Régimen’, pp. 135–160; H. Grönroos and A-C. Nyman, *Boken i Finland ... 1656–1809* (Helsinki, 1996), reviewed in *Scandinavian Studies*, Vol. 70 (1998), p. 112; and Robert, ‘Le livre et la lecture dans la noblesse canadienne 1670–1764’, pp. 3–27.

⁴³⁷ Houston, *Scottish Literacy*, pp. 165–171 and 297–300; and Shaw, *The Northern and Western Isles of Scotland*, particularly pp. 9–12.

⁴³⁸ Houston, *Scottish Literacy*, p. 170.

⁴³⁹ P. Martin, *Cupar: the history of a small Scottish town* (Edinburgh, 2006), especially pp. 107–126 and pp. 132–134.

⁴⁴⁰ My research into Angus inventories was part of my work as a research assistant on a Leverhulme Trust funded pilot project entitled ‘The Late Enlightenment Scottish Burgh’ (F/00143-F). Barrie was employed as a research assistant on a separate Dundee-based project investigating Georgian Dundee.

Houston's doubts were based on research focusing on the period before 1760. However it should be acknowledged however that there are difficulties with Scottish after-death inventories for all periods, if they were to be used to attempt to survey society as a whole. Even in the later period, such records are largely sporadic in terms of people covered, their completeness, and the level of detail recorded. Such variation had many causes, ranging from policies of individual courts and their bureaucrats through to the practices of individual assessors called in to value possessions. It was pot-luck that governed how much detail was copied by clerks into registers of testaments.⁴⁴¹ The information recorded could range from limited total values of estates (debts and/or possessions) through to detailed lists of debtors and room-by-room inventories of household possessions. The impression gained from examining a large number of Scottish testaments is that middle-class and wealthier individuals were more likely to appear in the registers of testaments than working-class people, but no more or less likely to have a detailed inventory of their possessions recorded there. Even where a detailed list of possessions was copied into the surviving registers, books owned might be unrecorded because they were missing or lent to others, or ignored by a valuer, either because he was focusing on other items, or because the books were considered of low or no value. They might indeed have been taken already by family and friends of the deceased person.⁴⁴² Testaments recorded legal necessities after a death, sometimes including a will listing legacies, and sometimes a detailed inventory of personal possessions.⁴⁴³ Testaments are generally unindexed in terms of their content, and because untranscribed must be searched manually—and laboriously—to find out what detailed content they and any included inventories contain, if anything.

⁴⁴¹ J.G. Currie, *The confirmation of executors in Scotland according to the practice in the Commissariat of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh, 1902) (3rd edition), p. 117 comments that complete inventories of estates were required by ancient practice but Commissaries admitted confirmation on much less detailed evidence. For further discussion of inventories as historical evidence see Shaw, *The Northern and Western Isles of Scotland*, pp. 9–12 and Inglis, 'Scottish testamentary inventories', especially pp. 57–58. Also relevant is H. Anderson, 'ScottishDocuments.com—Testaments online', *Scottish Archives*, Vol. 9 (2003), pp. 10–15 describing the recent digitisation of these records.

⁴⁴² Houston, *Scottish literacy*, pp. 165–166 comments on these factors, including the possibility that some assessors considered books to have been of too low a value to worry about when compiling total valuations for tax on the estate at 5%.

⁴⁴³ ScotlandsPeople.gov.uk—the official website providing online access to Scottish testaments among other genealogical records—includes alongside the indexes a detailed description of the way these records were compiled.

Nevertheless, books were found in a significant proportion of the Cupar and Angus inventories, indicating that such sources may well be more useful than previous commentators had suggested. Significantly, they also cover a much wider cross-section of society than private estate papers, thus providing a glimpse into the book collecting habits of groups which would otherwise largely remain hidden from view.

The analysis which follows is based on a large-scale study of testaments to provide the basis for the wider understanding of Scottish reading habits in this era. It addresses questions such as which books people had access to at home, whether professionals built up substantial work-related collections of books, and the extent to which contemporary influences be traced in book ownership. Whereas the Angus study was based on a carefully selected group of burgh inhabitants, the larger study had a broader scope, considering both urban and rural dwellers. The hit-and-miss nature of the underlying records suggests that any type of statistical sampling (for example looking at every tenth testament) would be doomed. Instead a comprehensive search of a court's registers of testaments was opted for, checking every single testament in turn, page after page, throughout the late 18th century. For practical reasons, such a search had to be restricted, and the obvious approach was to select a specific area. Population size and scale of search were major concerns. On the one hand it was important to check a reasonable number of records to find a good number listing books to make the results useful. Equally the number to be checked could not be so high that the search became impractical. Although such considerations tended towards lower-population courts, a further concern was that the court had to have a good run of records with no obvious gaps. That ruled out for example the Peebles Commissary Court, which would have permitted a study of three Border counties—Peeblesshire, Roxburghshire and Selkirkshire—but unfortunately has missing inventories before 1785.⁴⁴⁴ Another preference was to study an area away from the east coast, to provide a contrast with the existing known Angus and Fife examples. Other

⁴⁴⁴ Peebles Commissary Court has testaments for 1681–1699 then none until 1785.

desirable factors included a mix of rural and urban dwellers and preferably an area reflecting the predominantly Lowland population of Scotland.

Dumfries Commissary Court was therefore chosen. The court covered the whole of Dumfriesshire, as well as small portions of Kirkcudbrightshire.⁴⁴⁵ This area is in the south-west of Scotland, with good transport links, and lying partially by the sea.⁴⁴⁶ Its population in the late 18th century has been estimated to be approximately 50,000; lower than would ideally be surveyed for a case study like this but small enough to be practical to search its testaments in the time available.⁴⁴⁷ The research itself focused on the court's registers of testaments including years 1750–1800.⁴⁴⁸ Ideally it would have continued through to circa 1820, but when the sheriff courts took over responsibility for handling testaments in Scotland in the early 19th century, consistency of recording became an issue, and it was decided to focus instead on the records of just one court.⁴⁴⁹ Nevertheless Dumfries Commissary Court provided good coverage of the latter half of the 18th century, and checking its registers of testaments formed the bulk of the case study research.⁴⁵⁰ As an additional precautionary measure, this was followed by a manual check of the court's warrants of inventories, additional executory papers of appraisements and inventories, looking for detailed lists including books not copied into the registers of testaments.⁴⁵¹

⁴⁴⁵ A list of parishes with their respective Commissariots is found in R. Keith, *An historical catalogue of Scottish Bishops* (Edinburgh, 1824 new edition), pp. 311–371.

⁴⁴⁶ For a modern overview of the local area see J.R. Hume, *Dumfries and Galloway: an illustrated architectural guide* (Edinburgh, 2000), particularly pp. 3–5. For late 18th century county and parish reports see J. Sinclair (ed.), *The Statistical Account of Scotland 1791–1799: Volume IV Dumfriesshire* (Wakefield, 1978).

⁴⁴⁷ The *New Statistical Account* for 1834–1845 gives the population of Dumfriesshire in 1755 as 39,788 and in 1801 as 54,597—Vol. 4, p. 567.

⁴⁴⁸ The relevant Dumfries Commissary Court volumes are held by the NAS: CC5/6/13 (1746–1752), CC5/6/14 (1752–1766), CC5/6/15 (1766–1775), CC5/6/16 (1775–1785), CC5/6/17 (1785–1795), and CC5/6/18 (1795–1802). These registers have been scanned and can be searched on computer in the NAS.

⁴⁴⁹ Dumfries Sheriff Court's testaments were also examined, but detailed inventories appear to have been recorded more infrequently, particularly during the changeover.

⁴⁵⁰ This involved checking over 3000 pages of original volumes, 1379 testaments, including 345 with detailed inventories and 82 with wills.

⁴⁵¹ Warrants of inventories covering this period are NAS references CC5/10/1 (1741–1766), CC5/10/2 (1767–1778), CC5/10/3 (1779–1791), CC5/10/4 (1792–1798), and CC5/10/5 (1799–1804).

This additional check was prompted by concerns about the perceived rarity of book references—hence the value of any additional ones found.⁴⁵²

156 individuals had testamentary records referring to books.⁴⁵³ 13 were found with inventoried book furniture (book cases etc.) but no further references in their inventories to books. Another 29 were found with more explicit references to books but without detail—i.e. just total valuations of the books owned rather than lists of titles. The remaining 114 (73% of those found) have detailed lists of books including titles and/or subjects. References to books were found in over a third of the detailed inventories of personal possessions, much higher than Houston's research would have suggested, but similar to the frequencies found in the pilot study in Angus and in Martin's study of Cupar.⁴⁵⁴ Detailed inventories of personal possessions were only recorded in a quarter of the testaments at this time in Dumfries Commissary Court's registers of testaments.⁴⁵⁵ Just 5% of testaments were found to contain legacies, and only a tiny fraction of those mentioned books.⁴⁵⁶ As well as warrants of inventories, this court has warrants of testaments which may have uncovered some more legacies mentioning books.⁴⁵⁷ It was decided not to check these manually, because references to books were so rare in the wills copied into the registers of testaments, that an additional trawl for uncopied wills was thought unlikely to yield many additional references to books.

One of the major strengths of the evidence from the inventories is the number of different book owners, and the evidence for 156 different book owners permits a level of analysis that would not have been possible with a smaller sample. Nonetheless, problems with the underlying evidence—in particular concerns about its coverage of the local

⁴⁵² Checking later warrants may have helped to plug the recording shortfall through to 1820 but was ruled out as likely to be time consuming with little guarantee of success.

⁴⁵³ Of these 148 were found in the registers of testaments and 4 in the warrants.

⁴⁵⁴ Martin checked 91 inventories between 1689 and 1827 and found references to books in 33% of them—Martin, *Cupar*, pp. 108 and 132–133.

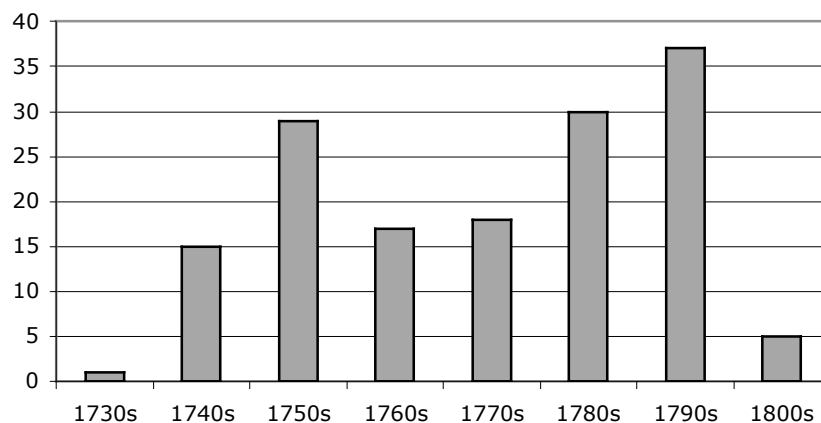
⁴⁵⁵ In volumes CC5/6/13–18 a total of 1379 testaments were checked and only 345 contained detailed inventories of personal possessions.

⁴⁵⁶ In volumes CC5/6/13–18 out of 1379 testaments only 82 listed legacies.

⁴⁵⁷ NAS CC5/8/1 has warrants of testaments for years 1694–1800.

population—prevent any kind of large-scale statistical analysis, and indeed limit the extent that these results could be compared with similar inventory studies in other countries.⁴⁵⁸

Graph 4 shows the spread of the book owners through time. One died in 1733 and her testament was not registered until 1751.⁴⁵⁹ Most died in the 1750s–1790s and a handful died in the early 1800s before the checked registers of testaments finished.



Graph 4: Numbers of book owners dying per decade found in Dumfriesshire inventories

Source: Dumfriesshire book ownership database (see Appendices 1 and 2) derived from Dumfries Commissary Court testaments, NAS, CC5/6/13–18; and Dumfries Commissary Court warrants of testaments, CC5/10/1–5.

Places of residence are recorded for 147 of the book owners. Of these 78 (53.1%) lived in rural areas, 49 (33.3%) in Dumfries, and 20 (13.6%) in smaller towns and villages.⁴⁶⁰ The rural nature of the local area is reflected in the occupations of book owners with the largest group comprising tenant farmers.

⁴⁵⁸ Many such studies take a highly quantitative approach even though there are often similar concerns about the underlying records.

⁴⁵⁹ Agnes Maxwell (d. 1733), widow of Rev. James Elder minister of Keir, left her ‘Guilded Bible’ to her nephew Edward McCulloch of Ardwall.

⁴⁶⁰ Dumfries’s population in the 1790s was about 5600. Smaller settlements included Annan, about 1620 people; Langholm, about 1500; Lockerbie, about 700; and (with unspecified village populations in the OSA) Sanquhar, Lochmaben and Moffat—see Sinclair, *The Statistical Account of Scotland 1791–1799: Volume IV Dumfriesshire*, pp. xil–xl.

**Table 14: Occupations of book owners
found in Dumfriesshire inventories**

<u>occupational group</u>	<u>number</u>
tenants, mostly farmers	32
merchant	22
gentry	21
minister	9
unspecified	6
writer	5
residenter/indweller	4
soldier	4
squareman/joiner	4
innkeeper/vintner	3
late Provost	3
sadler	3
surgeon	3
chapman	2
gardiner	2
miller	2
overseer	2
smith	2
baker's widow, bookseller, brewer, chamberlain to Duke, deacon convener, labourer, land surveyor, landwaiter, mason, mason's widow, merchant's widow, messenger, minister's widow, portioner, schoolmaster, servant, shipmaster, shoemaker, shopkeeper, skinner, staymaker, surveyor general of customs, tobacconist, town clerk, washerwoman, wright's widow, writer's widow	1 each

Source: Dumfriesshire book ownership database (see Appendices 1 and 2)
derived from Dumfries Commissary Court testaments, NAS, CC5/6/13–18;
and Dumfries Commissary Court warrants of testaments, CC5/10/1–5.

**Table 15: Categorising occupations of book owners
in Dumfriesshire inventories**

farming/agriculture	39 (25.0%)
artisans/tradesmen	32 (20.5%)
professionals	25 (16.0%)
merchants	22 (14.1%)
gentry	21 (13.5%)
military	4 (2.6%)
servants	2 (1.3%)
shipmaster	1 (0.6%)
other/unspecified	10 (6.4%)
Total	156

Source: see Table 14.

Such a high number of rural dwellers and occupations among the book owners contradicts Houston's perception of predominantly urban dwellers among book owners recorded in inventories. However, some groups appear to be better represented than others. For example there are relatively few women (16 out of 156 book owners) which might suggest that they owned fewer books, or perhaps more likely that their possessions were recorded in less detail after death.⁴⁶¹ In addition, there are few members of the titled nobility, even if smaller-scale gentry are represented in significant numbers.⁴⁶² The presence of professionals is unsurprising, but the large number of merchants is striking, half living in Dumfries itself, with the rest scattered throughout smaller towns and villages. There are also more working-class book owners than might be expected given Houston's reservations—a minority, but a sizeable minority nevertheless.

One of the clearest trends is persistence of religious book ownership throughout the period. The books of people dying in the late 1740s and 1750s generally consisted of a Bible and a few other religious books, but by the 1790s and early 1800s the equivalent lists included secular books such as histories alongside the Bible; usually taking the numbers of books listed into double figures. Widespread ownership of religious books is consistent with contemporary accounts which describe how every house would have at least one copy of the Bible and that this was often the first book that children learned to read.⁴⁶³ It is possible though that the pattern of bible ownership in Dumfriesshire was higher than that elsewhere in Scotland, because the county was traditionally a staunch Covenanting area, and so attitudes to religion might have differed from those elsewhere.⁴⁶⁴ In addition Glasgow—relatively nearby—was renowned for producing religious books

⁴⁶¹ A direct comparison between books owned by men and women was briefly considered but ruled out because of the relatively small number of women found and variability in the underlying records.

⁴⁶² A rare example of the aristocracy is Richard Dalzell (1753–1782), 'Lord Dalzell', younger of Glenae—see J.B. Paul (ed.), *The Scots Peerage: Volume II* (Edinburgh, 1905), pp. 416–417.

⁴⁶³ Other religious books read by youngsters according to contemporary accounts include Hervey's *Meditations* and Boston's *Fourfold State*: two more books found frequently in the Dumfriesshire inventories.

⁴⁶⁴ F. Miller, *The Poets of Dumfriesshire* (Glasgow, 1910), pp. 88–105 describes the strength of the local covenanting tradition and some of the poems from the time.

which might have furthered skewed the pattern of bible ownership.⁴⁶⁵ Although surveying book ownership across the whole of Scotland was not practical, there is a useful comparison with known Angus book owners.⁴⁶⁶ They also had religious books, as part of wider collections, comparable to the situation later in Dumfriesshire. However, the known Angus book owners were from the early 19th century, preventing a comparison earlier on, specifically in the mid 18th century.

One possible explanation for the Bible in so many household inventories is that this was often the family's most valued book, and thus more likely to be preserved, with inventories underestimating the ownership of other, but less valuable, reading material. This could be so, but it does not adequately explain the increasing presence of secular works in inventories over the ensuing decades. Why would such material be recorded more later unless it was because it was found more frequently and there was a demonstrable change in genres of books owned in general?

Another large category of books in Dumfriesshire can be identified as those probably bought for work purposes—particularly noticeable among occupations using highly specialised reference books. A large group of professionals with work-related books were ministers, though more specialised than the general religious books found among the wider population. Nine Church of Scotland minister book owners were found, all but one were ministers of rural parishes.⁴⁶⁷ A few of their inventories only list the total values of their books, for example Thomas Mack's 'Library of Books in Folio, Quarto, Octavo et Infra' which was valued at £13 12s 8d sterling, but its detailed catalogue was not copied

⁴⁶⁵ The sheer volume of religious books published in Glasgow during this period is apparent by studying the *English Short Title Catalogue* (<http://estc.bl.uk>).

⁴⁶⁶ Again this use of the Angus material is drawing on research prior to the PhD conducted while I was employed as a research assistant.

⁴⁶⁷ John Good at Auchencairn (d. 1746), Thomas Mack at Terregles (d. 1750), Alexander Ker at Dunscore (d. 1751), John Irving at Sanquhar (d. 1752), John Allan at Kirkmichael (d. 1758), Walter Cook at Cummertrees (d. 1759), William Sloan at Dunscore (d. 1765), Dr John Burgess at Kirkmichael (d. 1795) and James Finnan at Kirkpatrick Irongray (d. 1796). 9 ministers out of 152 book owners is a smaller proportion than the 20 ministers out of 56 book owners found by Shaw in pre-1750 Northern and Western Isles—Houston, *Scottish literacy*, pp. 169–170.

into the registers of testaments.⁴⁶⁸ Most ministers' books were listed however, and there are several recurring titles: Pool's *Annotations*, Burket on the New Testament, the Cambridge Concordance, Hebrew Bibles and dictionaries, and books of sermons.

Similarly the book owners include five legal professionals: one writer in Lockerbie, three writers in Dumfries, and a Town Clerk of Dumfries.⁴⁶⁹ All of them owned numerous legal books: typically Bankton's *Institute of the Laws of Scotland*, *Dictionary of Decisions*, copies of Acts of Parliament, Stair's *Institute*, Erskine's *Institute*, Spottiswood's *Stiles*, and abridgements by Swinton and others. Another man with an extensive collection of legal books was John Hynd of Drumcoltrane (d. 1779), a rural laird. He may have trained as a lawyer, or could have inherited some of the books from an older generation. Many of his legal books were similar to those owned by the writers in Dumfries.⁴⁷⁰ Hynd could have been a local legal official, or might have needed law books for his own needs as a landowner, one of a group of people who at this time were frequently involved in litigation and boundary disputes according to court records.

Among other professionals James Tait junior, surveyor in Lockerbie (d. 1800), owned nearly 100 books including Muller's *Field Engineer*, Weild's *Practical Surveyor*, *Surveyor's Guide*, *Art of Surveying*, *Treatise on Surveying*, books on inland navigation, mathematics, and other related sciences. Similarly, work-related books were owned by surgeons Ebenezer Donaldson (d. 1785) and Alexander Brown (d. 1800), both in Dumfries. Donaldson's list of books was modest: Brook's *Practice of Physic*, Sharp's *Surgery*, Worthcoat's *Marine Practice*, a dispensatory, and a number of old (unspecified) medical books.⁴⁷¹ Brown's inventory listed many books of all kinds including medical ones. Like Donaldson he owned core texts such as Cullen's *Practice of Physic*, Bell's

⁴⁶⁸ NAS, CC5/6/13, 1750 September 5.

⁴⁶⁹ Archibald Bell writer in Lockerbie (d. 1768), William Clerk elder writer in Dumfries (d. 1783), Robert Gordon writer in Dumfries (d. 1789), Thomas Stothart of Arkland writer in Dumfries (d. 1791) and Archibald Malcolm conjunct Town Clerk of Dumfries (d. 1795).

⁴⁷⁰ Hynd owned the classic Justice of the Peace manual by Burn, as well as two copies of Schaw's Justice of peace, and one of Neilson's.

⁴⁷¹ NAS, CC5/6/17, 1786 February 10.

Anatomy, Surgery, and the Edinburgh Dispensatory.⁴⁷² Other medical books listed covered more specialist topics such as smallpox, gonorrhea, female diseases, and medical jurisprudence. In addition he owned volumes of the *Medical Review*. One other medical book owner appears in the testaments but here the evidence is his will. Matthew Gowenlock (d. 1747?) surgeon in Moffat left all of his books, pocket instruments, blue coat and breeches to his apprentice Robert Ewart, providing interesting evidence of how books were passed on but no information about the type of books he owned.⁴⁷³

Among non-professionals, work-related books were more rarely found, even among merchants, a significantly large occupational group among the book owners. Most of these men appear to have been small shopkeepers, selling a range of goods including cloth, buttons, food, and bottles. Only rarely were there hints of potentially international trading.⁴⁷⁴ Only nine of these men had books among their shop stock, in other words they were books to sell rather than any guide to the individual's own reading tastes. Of the remaining 15 merchant book owners, most of their book collections were modest, little extending beyond the standard Bible and usually associated religious works.⁴⁷⁵ Most of them owned fewer than 10 titles, only one having a significantly larger collection. William Bell, merchant and Bailie of Dumfries (d. 1766), had nearly 100 books (many trade-related) and a 'parcel of Unbound Magazines and Pamphlets'. Bell's collection is comparable in size to those of book-owning merchants traced in 1810s Angus inventories.⁴⁷⁶ Indeed by the early 19th century, merchants were prominent among lists of subscribers to new books.⁴⁷⁷ However in late 18th century Dumfriesshire merchant book

⁴⁷² NAS, CC5/6/18, 1801 June 11.

⁴⁷³ NAS, CC5/6/13, 1748 April 12.

⁴⁷⁴ For example Mr Charles Johnston 'of Ostend in the Dominions of his August Majesty the Emperor of Germany Merchant who for some time resided in the Burgh of Dumfries'.

⁴⁷⁵ Exceptions to the typically religious subject matter include reference works such as dictionaries, the *Spectator* and an 8-volume edition of Shakespeare's works.

⁴⁷⁶ For example William Don Merchant in Forfar (d. 1817) with over 125 books; James Bell Merchant in Arbroath (d. 1819) with over 80 items; and John Andson sometime merchant in and Provost of Arbroath (d. 1814) with over 40 volumes.

⁴⁷⁷ As an example of this, see H. Holmes, 'For the Encouragement of Agricultural Improvement in Scotland in the 1780s: Subscribers to the agricultural books of David Young', *Review of Scottish Culture*, Vol. 17 (2004–2005), pp. 30–33.

collections tended to be more modest, and Bell's large collection was the exception rather than the norm.

More work-related books were owned by a few artisans and tradesmen in Dumfries. Andrew Watson, late Deacon of the Squaremen (masons) (d. 1793), had 13 books, mainly religious but including 'two books on Architecture worth ten shillings and sixpence'.⁴⁷⁸ Similarly John McKinnell of Glen, brewer and resider in Dumfries (d. 1786), owned 'four books relating to Brewing'.⁴⁷⁹ These were rare however, for most artisans and tradesmen did not own work-related books. A similar situation applied to tenant farmers, the largest group of book owners found in these records. Most had crops, animals and farming equipment among their inventories of personal possessions. No sign of agricultural or farming books can be seen, and religious books predominate as with John Hyslop in Glengar in the parish of Penpont (d. 1775) with 'Seventeen Small Books upon practical Divinity ... a Bible & Psalm Book ... Sundry Pamphlets'.⁴⁸⁰ The inventories suggest that Dumfriesshire farmers at this time were highly literate but perhaps not reading so much about agricultural improvement and new methods of husbandry. Perhaps, as Chapter 5 suggested, they were accessing such books via other means. However, chronology may also be a factor: many of the most significant agricultural surveys were published towards the very end of the 18th century or even later, so would be unlikely to be picked up in this study of predominantly pre-1800 book ownership.

Although work-related books were found in a large number of cases, particularly among professional men, books of other types are also noticeable. Latin and Greek texts were owned by 19 people, some professionals and gentry, but others of more humble origins such as William Hamilton smith in Sanquhar (d. 1747?), whose collection consisted of

⁴⁷⁸ Another two squaremen appear as book owners: William Affleck Deacon of Squaremen in Dumfries (d. 1745) and Andrew Hog sometime Deacon of the Incorporation of Squaremen in Dumfries (d. 1790). In a related occupation Archibald Ewart joiner in Dumfries (d. 1795) also owned books per his inventory.

⁴⁷⁹ NAS, CC5/6/17, 1786 December 30.

⁴⁸⁰ NAS, CC5/6/16, 1776 March 18.

Item a large bible an old Confession of faith Durham upon Isaiah, Perkins Cases of Conscience weaving spiritualized, Flavels Fountain of Life, an Explanation of Zechariah in Latin An Explanation of the Song of Solomon, Dissertations upon Logiks in Latin, a Latin Book upon the use of Words, Priors Philosophy in Latin a Psalmbook, Vincents Catechism, a Latin Confession of Faith an Old Latin Testament Juvenals Satires in Latin Two old psalm books a Sermon book in writing Caesars Commentaries in Latin Solomons Temple spiritualized all worth Three pounds Seventeen shillings Scots⁴⁸¹

Such books may reflect the legacy of a classical education still predominant in Scottish schools.⁴⁸² More recent influences probably accounted for the presence of French books, both language guides and other books in French. Professionals were well represented in such, but also Alexander Nivison in Kirkbog (d. 1744), who left ‘all my Greek & Latine & French books’ to his second son, as well as a collection of pamphlets to his sister, and Bibles and others religious works to his nephew and nieces.⁴⁸³ Similarly Mary Craig, residenter at Mabie (d. 1788), owned ‘Eighteen books, mostly french, worth five shillings’.⁴⁸⁴ Around the same time, William Roddan in Bilbow in the parish of Troqueer (d. 1784) owned a dictionary, mathematics, science and bookkeeping books plus Boyer’s French Grammar and *Telemaque* in two volumes.⁴⁸⁵ Finally the inventory of Lieut-Col. Robert Irving of the 70th Regiment of Foot (d. 1794) included ‘French & English Rudiments & Vocabulary worth Two shillings ... French Collection, Recuil, Fishers Arithmetic and another French Vocabulary worth Two shillings & Sixpence’ and the ‘Seventh Volume of Rosseau’s Works and Fathers Legacy worth Sixpence’.⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁸¹ NAS, CC5/6/13, 1748 April 27.

⁴⁸² R.D. Anderson, *Scottish education since the Reformation* (Glasgow, 1997), pp. 6, 10.

⁴⁸³ NAS, CC5/6/13, 1748 August 17.

⁴⁸⁴ NAS, CC5/6/17, 1788 April 10.

⁴⁸⁵ NAS, CC5/6/17, 1785 June 9.

⁴⁸⁶ Like the other three soldier book owners there was no sign of army-related reading (e.g. military biographies/histories) among Lieut-Col. Irving’s books.

In terms of Enlightenment texts, only two had works by Rousseau, although four had writings by Voltaire.⁴⁸⁷ Nobody owned a copy of Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, although five owned works by Hume.⁴⁸⁸ Generally those owning these books were either gentry or writers as Table 16 shows.

**Table 16: Owners of books by key Enlightenment authors
found in Dumfriesshire inventories**

<u>Person</u>	<u>Rousseau</u>	<u>Voltaire</u>	<u>Hume</u>
William Bell merchant & Bailie of Dumfries (d. 1766)		X	
Robert Lorimer in Auchennaugh (d. 1778)		X	
John Hynd of Drumcoltrane (d. 1779)			X
Samuel Young of Gulyhill (d. 1782)	X	X	X
Charles Ewart of Rotchell (d. 1787)	X		X
Robert Gordon writer in Dumfries (d. 1789)		X	X
Thomas Stothart of Arkland writer in Dumfries (d.1791)			X
William Wilson Staymaker in Dumfries (d. 1800)			X

Source: Dumfriesshire book ownership database (see Appendices 1 and 2) derived from Dumfries Commissary Court testaments, NAS, CC5/6/13–18; and Dumfries Commissary Court warrants of testaments, CC5/10/1–5.

Looking for books by key figures is one approach to examining Enlightenment influence, but other relevant genres were also relevant. Reference works were increasingly important in this age of learning and three men owned copies of Johnson's *Dictionary* and another two the *Encyclopedia Britannica*.⁴⁸⁹ The latter book was a sizeable investment, and may have been bought as a luxury item to collect. However owning it afforded its owner the opportunity to research more widely the world around him, consistent with an enquiring mind keen to engage with contemporary ideas.

⁴⁸⁷ Young and Ewart each owned 10-volume editions of Rousseau's Works. For Voltaire William Bell owned a copy of the *History of the War 1741*, Robert Lorimer *State of Europe*, Samuel Young the *Philosophical Dictionary*, and Robert Gordon all of *Peter the Great*, *Henriad* and *Charles the Twelfth*.

⁴⁸⁸ Most had copies of Hume's *History of England* but Robert Gordon had *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* and Samuel Young had both that and the history.

⁴⁸⁹ Johnson's *Dictionary* was owned by John Hynd of Drumcoltrane, Samuel Young of Gulyhill and brewer John McKinnell in Dumfries. The *Encyclopedia Britannica* was owned by David Blair of Bellenmont late provost of Dumfries (d. 1793) and Alexander Brown surgeon in Dumfries (d. 1800).

Another crucial Enlightenment genre was history, particularly the new narrative form championed by Hume, Robertson and others.⁴⁹⁰ Over 20 Dumfriesshire book owners owned history books, not just in the largest collections but also in some of the smaller ones as well, often in addition to a core collection of religious books. For example, William Wilson staymaker (d. 1800), owned 17 titles including a Household Bible, religious exercises and commentaries, Young's *Night Thoughts*, five volumes of *The Spectator*, and history works by authors such as Hume and Robertson on the Stewarts, England, Mary and James of Scotland, and Emperor Charles the Fifth.⁴⁹¹ Such widespread ownership of narrative history suggests a considerable interest in this new form of writing, and a high degree of dissemination of the corresponding Enlightenment ideas. History was a particularly popular subject, both in the books available on the market and books stocked by libraries around Scotland. Its contemporary importance can be seen in the large number of history titles published, as discussed by Sher in his survey of books in the Scottish Enlightenment.⁴⁹²

Magazines, including *The Spectator*, featured in a significant number of the inventories, and twenty Dumfriesshire book owners had magazine back issues among their collections. Nearly half of these men were members of the gentry, a quarter of the men professionals, and four of them merchants. Such a bias towards the wealthier classes suggests that reading magazines, at least at this time in Dumfriesshire, was something more likely to be pursued by this sector of society, possibly for cost reasons.

⁴⁹⁰ O'Brien, 'The history market in eighteenth-century England', pp. 105–133 surveys the changing genre in this period.

⁴⁹¹ NAS, CC5/6/18, 1800 August 26.

⁴⁹² The large number of history titles produced in the late 18th century can be seen by scanning through the titles of books published and listed in Sher's Appendix — Sher, *The Enlightenment and the Book*, pp. 620–687.

**Table 17: Owners of various magazines
found in Dumfriesshire inventories**

<u>Person</u>	<u>Magazines held</u>
William Henry merchant in Wanlockhead (d. 1757)	Univ, Scots
William Bell merchant & Bailie of Dumfries (d. 1766)	unspec, Univ, Scots, Spectator
John Williamson in Crol chapell (d. 1775)	Edin, Spectator
Robert Lorimer in Auchennaugh (d. 1778)	Spectator
John Hynd of Drumcoltrane (d. 1779)	Spectator
Samuel Young of Gulyhill (d. 1782)	D.W.
William Clerk elder writer in Dumfries (d.1783)	Spectator
James Anderson junior merchant in Dumfries (d. 1786)	Spectator
Charles Ewart of Rotchell (d. 1787)	unspec, T&C, English, Spectator, Tatler
Robert Gordon writer in Dumfries (d. 1789)	unspec
Thomas Stothart of Arkland writer in Dumfries (d. 1791)	Spectator, Tatler
Thomas Twaddell Landwaiter at Dumfries (d. 1793)	unspec, Spectator
David Blair of Bellenmont late Provost of Dumfries (d. 1793)	T&C, Spectator
Lieutenant John Corrie in Dealbank (d. 1790)	unspec
Robert Maxwell late Provost of Dumfries (d. 1793)	Univ, Lond
Dr John Burgess minister at Kirkmichael (d. 1795)	Spectator
Alexander Fergusson of Craigdarroch (d. 1796)	Tatler
John Kerr merchant in Ecclefechan (d. 1798?)	Spectator
William Wilson staymaker in Dumfries (d. 1800)	Spectator
Alexander Brown surgeon in Dumfries (d. 1800)	Univ, Lit

Note: unspec = unspecified/unidentified magazines; Univ = Universal Magazine; Scots = Scots Magazine; T&C = Town & Country; D.W. = Dumfries Weekly; Edin = Edinburgh Magazine; Engl = English Magazine; Lond = London Magazine; Lit = Literary Magazine
Source: Dumfriesshire book ownership database (see Appendices 1 and 2) derived from Dumfries Commissary Court testaments, NAS, CC5/6/13–18; and Dumfries Commissary Court warrants of testaments, CC5/10/1–5.

**Table 18: How frequently named magazines
appear among Dumfriesshire book owners**

<u>Title</u>	<u>Number of owners</u>
Spectator	13
Universal Magazine	4
Tatler	3
Scots Magazine	2
Town & Country	2
Dumfries Weekly	1
Edinburgh Magazine	1
Literary Magazine	1
London Magazine	1

Source: see Table 17.

From Table 18 it can be seen that the *Spectator* was easily the most popular periodical among the Dumfriesshire book owners. This publication dated originally from the early

18th century, but was republished in book form and became a bestseller in later decades. Other magazines such as the *Scots Magazine* provided, among other things, a chronological review of recent events, keeping their readers in touch with recent developments in Scottish and British society, as well as informing them about European and global perspectives. More interest in reading about and engaging with British issues is suggested by ownership of magazines such as *Town & Country*, *Universal Magazine*, *The Spectator* and *The Tatler*. However, as well as general British reading material, there were also some Scottish-specific titles in the collections, such as the short-lived *Dumfries Weekly Magazine*. This was before the era of Scott's Waverley novels, and probably also too early for Burns—for only Alexander Brown surgeon in Dumfries (d. 1800) had a copy of Burns's works. Slightly earlier, two men had copies of Ossian or a discussion about it.⁴⁹³ Similarly two more had copies of Pennant's *Tour around Scotland*.⁴⁹⁴ One local landowner had a copy of the *Transactions of the Dumfries Agricultural Society*, as one might expect to have found among these private book collections.⁴⁹⁵

The Spectator and *The Tatler* above were reprints from the early 18th century. Reprints were increasingly significant in the Scottish book market, and the Dumfriesshire inventories reveal that the 'Old Canon' body of literature was present in many collections, something that would be further spurred on by the copyright relaxations following the copyright trials of the 1770s, which made such works more readily available, and at lower cost.⁴⁹⁶ Old Canon works found in Dumfriesshire homes included relatively recent works by Fielding, as well as works of poetry and plays by Milton, Pope, Dryden, Thomson and Shakespeare. It is likely that almost all of these copies were relatively recent reprints, even though they may still have been bought decades earlier.

⁴⁹³ Samuel Young of Gulyhill (d. 1782) owned a 1762 edition of *Ossians Works* and Alexander Fergusson of Craigdarroch (d. 1796) owned a *Critical Dissertation on Ossians Poems*.

⁴⁹⁴ John Williamson in Crol chapell (d. 1775) and Robert Gordon writer in Dumfries (d. 1789).

⁴⁹⁵ This was Alexander Fergusson of Craigdarroch (d. 1796).

⁴⁹⁶ W. St Clair, *The reading nation* describes the growing market for Old Canon works at this time, especially pp. 122–139.

By contrast, newer titles such as novels appeared only occasionally in the inventories, were usually about journeys to foreign lands, and owned by a small group of men.⁴⁹⁷ Limited ownership of such a popular genre is not surprising if people were more likely to borrow novels from circulating libraries or from friends.⁴⁹⁸ Dumfries had at least two circulating libraries in the late 18th century.⁴⁹⁹ Moreover some of the Dumfriesshire book owners would have had access to circulating libraries outside the county, even in Edinburgh itself if they went up there for the season.⁵⁰⁰

Table 19 shows the changing diversity of subjects owned. The shift to a more varied and increasingly secular range of books followed general trends throughout Europe and North America, and fits well with Engelsing's 'reading revolution' in the 18th century. Admittedly book ownership is not the same as reading, and people could borrow books to read from libraries and friends. Nevertheless, the evidence from the inventories suggests that people were collecting an increasingly diverse range of books, consistent with a change to a more extensive style of reading, as discussed in Chapter 5, plus the increasing importance of books as items to be bought and acquired. In terms of the REI classification analysis, the shift was again from mostly religious books in the early years to improvement books, and then—to a lesser extent—entertainment books, later.

⁴⁹⁷ Recorded owners of novels were Samuel Young of Gulyhill (d. 1782) with seven titles; David Blair of Bellenmont late provost of Dumfries (d. 1793) with five; Robert Maxwell late Provost of Dumfries (d. 1793) and Alexander Fergusson of Craigdarroch (d. 1796) with two each; and James Neilson late Servant to Sir William Grierson of Lag (d. 1754), John Hynd of Drumcoltrane (d. 1779) and Dr John Burgess minister at Kirkmichael (d. 1795) with one each. As for the novels themselves *Don Quixote* is listed five times, *Robinson Crusoe* and Montesquieu's *Turkish Spy* three times; *Arabian Tales* and *Peregrine Pickle* twice; and *Gulliver's Travels*, *Tom Jones*, *Humphry Clinker*, and *Roderick Random* once each.

⁴⁹⁸ Jacobs, 'Eighteenth-century British circulating libraries and cultural book history', p. 19 reviewed circulating library catalogues and found that fiction accounted for 20% of stock of larger ones (average holdings of about 5000 titles) and 70% of stock of smaller ones (average holdings of 430 titles).

⁴⁹⁹ Library History Database (<http://www.r-alston.co.uk/scotland.htm>).

⁵⁰⁰ This includes both individuals who spent some time in Edinburgh, and others who could afford to pay the additional cost of borrowing books through the postal system.

**Table 19: Subjects of books owned present in each decade
in the Dumfriesshire inventories**

	<u>1740s</u>	<u>1750s</u>	<u>1760s to 1790s</u>
religion	X	X	X
history and biography		X	X
voyages and travels			X
novels			X
poetry		X	X
plays			X
grammar and spelling	X	X	X
classics	X		X
magazines		X	X

Source: Dumfriesshire book ownership database (see Appendices 1 and 2) derived from Dumfries Commissary Court testaments, NAS, CC5/6/13–18; and Dumfries Commissary Court warrants of testaments, CC5/10/1–5.

It is striking that a number of individuals recur among the owners of Enlightenment works, novels, Old Canon literature, and magazines. Each individual had built a large collection of books, and Table 20 shows the subjects of the larger book collections, almost exclusively owned by members of the professional class, or the landed gentry. Even these large collections can be further divided into two groups based on size: the smaller larger collections, comprising 100 volumes or less, and the even larger ones, comprising between 140 volumes up to over 300. Owners in the latter group included a number of professionals, but the very largest book collections were more likely to be owned by gentry, those individuals best able to invest heavily in substantial private libraries.

**Table 20: Larger book collections found
in Dumfriesshire inventories**

<u>Person</u>	<u>Died</u>	<u>Number of books</u>	<u>Subjects represented</u>
Mr John Good minister at Auchencairn	1746	94	religion, dictionaries, grammar
William Bell merchant and Bailie of Dumfries	1766	99 + parcel of magazines and pamphlets	trade, politics, dictionaries, religion, history, law, novels, classics, gazetteers, health, biography, voyages/travels, geography, Spectator, atlases, magazines, poetry, mathematics
John Hynd of Drumcoltrane	1779	150 or thereabouts	Spectator, essays, classics, poetry, history, mathematics, religion, dictionary, trade
Richard Dalzell younger of Glenae ('Lord Dalzell')	1782	90 or thereabouts	religion, voyages/travels, history, peerage, medical, gardening, sporting, horses, animals, hunting, dictionaries, maps, speeches
Samuel Young of Gulyhill	1782	61	religion, law, poetry, husbandry, registers, dictionaries, history, magazines, medical, classics, plays, mathematics, voyages/travels, angling
Robert Gordon writer in Dumfries	1789	92 named ones + 51 volumes of old magazines, different books etc.	voyages/travels, philosophy, history, classics, science, reading, dictionary, poetry, law, novels, Enlightenment, grammar, magazines
Thomas Stothart of Arkland writer in Dumfries	1791	165 or thereabouts	law, religion, history, novels, Spectator, plays, poetry, grammars, husbandry, science, logic, Tatler
David Blair of Bellenmont late Provost of Dumfries	1793	75 + odd volumes of plays and pamphlets	religion, education, grammar, history, dictionaries, plants, mathematics, husbandry, trade, medical, gardening, poetry, encyclopedia, cookery, songs, atlas, Spectator, plays, magazines, novels, gaming
Dr John Burgess minister at Kirkmichael	1795	270 named ones + 64 odd volumes of books	religion, botany, classics, gardening, mathematics, science, Spectator, history, grammar, poetry, medical, gaming, clockmaking, novels, gazetteers, agriculture, Gaelic language, politics, dictionaries, mathematics, voyages/travels
Alexander Fergusson of Craigdarroch	1796	123 named ones + 67 odd volumes of books	classics, law, gardening, history, politics, geography, religion, poetry, agricultural, plays, voyages/travels, magazines, novels, gazetteer
James Tait junior surveyor in Lockerbie	1796	99 + magazines, newspapers	science, mathematics, surveying; also dictionaries, grammar, magazines, history, newspapers, religion, voyages/travels, plays, geography

Source: Dumfriesshire book ownership database (see Appendices 1 and 2) derived from Dumfries Commissary Court testaments, NAS, CC5/6/13–18; and Dumfries Commissary Court warrants of testaments, CC5/10/1–5.

Although some of these individuals would have used books for work purposes, particularly professionals, work-related books formed only part of their libraries, for like some of the local gentry these professionals were building a larger collection of books. The investment in these books should not be underestimated, although one drawback of after-death lists is that they are little guide to the time-scale over which books were acquired, and which books were inherited from others. Nor should it be assumed that all professionals and gentry were following the book collecting patterns of the men shown above. These may have been people who valued books more than others, both for reading, and as objects to acquire. Nevertheless, it is likely that other like-minded Scots would have built or aspired to similar collections, and the habit of book collecting was becoming more widely diffused, at least among sections of the middling sort. Comparing these large Dumfriesshire collections to the Angus collections, the latter tend to be later in time and smaller in size, although the smaller scale of the Angus pilot study may partially explain this, for insufficient larger collections were found.⁵⁰¹ The collections from the two counties, however, were remarkably similar in content, even accounting for the difference in time, and the impression is of continuity rather than change. Since some of the books could have been lent among friends, their owners should be considered not as isolated readers or hoarders but as participating in a provincial Enlightenment setting.

With larger collections, storage became more of an issue, both in terms of specific furniture and use of dedicated rooms.⁵⁰² 24 of the inventories mention furniture to store books—William Carlyle of Locharthur (d. 1751), for example, having ‘a parcel of Old Books in a press’.⁵⁰³ More references to book cases appear from the 1770s onwards, possibly partly because they were found more frequently in the houses then, possibly also

⁵⁰¹ An exception to the size contrast is John Watt Esquire of Meathie Provost of Forfar who owned over 450 items (many multi-volume) when he died in 1815.

⁵⁰² For a recent overview of book storage at this time in Scotland see M.C.T. Simpson, ‘Housing Books in Scotland before 1800’, *The Journal of the Edinburgh Bibliographical Society*, Vol. 4 (2009), pp. 11–31. Generally, though, this aspect of book history has been little researched. S. West, ‘Studies and spaces for books in seventeenth-century Penshurst Place, Kent’, *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society*, Vol. XII (2002), pp. 266–292 is a rare example addressing the issue for an earlier English gentry family.

⁵⁰³ NAS, CC5/6/13, 1751 November 26.

because they were valuable pieces of furniture and thus more likely to be noted by valuers.⁵⁰⁴ This was the era of David Allan's 'The Connoisseurs' (1780) which shows a characteristic Edinburgh-made book case. In the Dumfriesshire inventories, Thomas Stothart of Arkland writer in Dumfries (d. 1791) had 'a Mahogany Book Case worth Ten pounds Ten shillings' in his parlour and 'Drawers and Book Case worth Six pounds Ten Shillings' in his bedroom.⁵⁰⁵ Dedicated library spaces were mentioned in a number of the inventories, particularly those of ministers, for example Alexander Ker at Dunscore (d. 1751), John Irving at Sanquhar (d. 1752), Dr John Burgess at Kirkmichael (d. 1795) and James Finnan at Kirkpatrick Irongray (d. 1796).

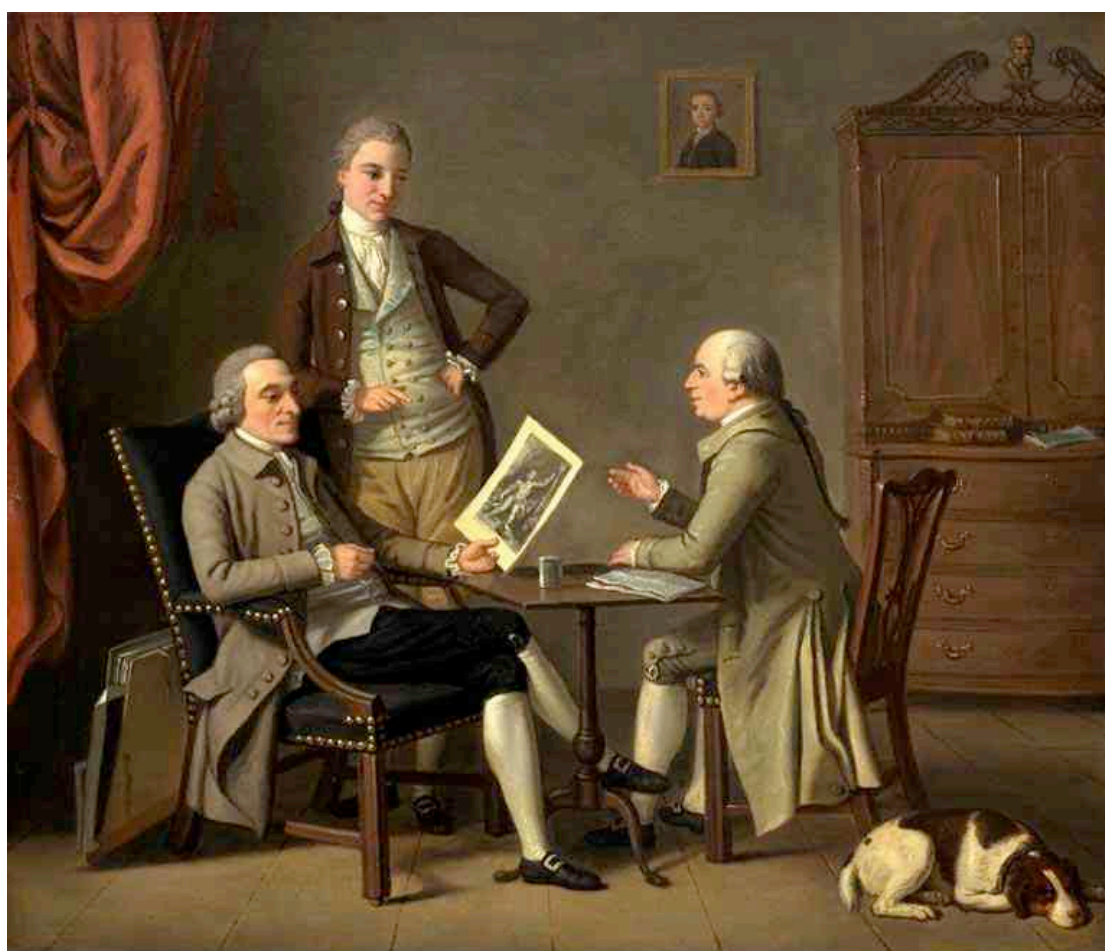


Figure 10: David Allan's 'The Connoisseurs' (1780)

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⁵⁰⁴ In private correspondence furniture history expert David Jones observed that '1770-1780 was certainly the hey day for bookcases in Scotland'. For retrospective specifications of late 18th century book cases see D. Jones (ed.), *The Edinburgh cabinet and chair makers' books of prices 1805-1825* (Cupar, 2000).

⁵⁰⁵ NAS, CC5/6/17, 1792 October 2.

Chapters 2 and 4 mentioned the well-stocked local bookshop of Dumfries bookseller Ebenezer Wilson, who died in 1788, whose stock correlated remarkably closely to the books found in the Dumfriesshire homes.⁵⁰⁶ Most titles found in the inventories could be bought in Wilson's shop, and generally only older or more specialised texts (particularly legal and medical) were missing and thus would have had to be ordered in from further afield. The inventories also reveal other local sources for buying books with both general merchants and chapmen stocking religious books such as bibles.⁵⁰⁷

Although this local court was chosen for practical reasons, there are some features of Dumfriesshire that might make the pattern of book ownership distinct from other places. For example, the issue of religion might derive from a different attitude to religious books, given the local covenanting tradition and proximity of Glasgow.⁵⁰⁸ It was also very much a rural area with a significant number of farmers, although this was the case with much of Scotland at this time when most people lived in the countryside. The county may have been low population and without large cities, but as seen from the example of Ebenezer Wilson people still had good quality bookshops within the county, as well as longer-distance access to bookshops elsewhere.

It is important, however, to reflect on who was represented in the inventories. Although a significant number of large-scale collectors of books were found, relatively few working-class book owners were traced compared to their proportion of the population. Extending the study over a wider geographical area might uncover more working-class examples, but they were still more of a minority than they should be. This is despite prior research showing that working-class Scots bought books as well.⁵⁰⁹ On the plus side there is enough evidence to usefully investigate change over time, even if measuring the extent of book ownership is not as feasible as hoped.

⁵⁰⁶ NAS, CC5/6/17, 1790 February 16.

⁵⁰⁷ See for example NAS, CC5/6/16, 1780 September 19; NAS, CC5/6/16, 1781 October 2; NAS, CC5/6/14, 1758 February 4; and NAS, CC5/6/16, 1784 March 15.

⁵⁰⁸ It is even possible that the covenanting backdrop could change attitudes to literacy.

⁵⁰⁹ For example Laslett, 'Scottish weavers, cobblers and miners'.

Chronology is also important. Although they provide a snapshot view in time, the book collections found in inventories tend to be those of older owners, built up over a lifetime, which raises the question of how accurately they reflected their owners' reading tastes. Some of the books might have sat unread on shelves, or be read by other members of the household. Others would have been bought decades earlier but not read in a long time, or inherited from older relatives. In addition it is inevitable that inventoried collections were skewed towards the more valuable texts owned by families, such as bibles.

Despite such concerns, the Dumfriesshire inventories provide a good insight into the books Scots had in their homes in the late 18th century. It would be easy—if wrong—to view Dumfriesshire as a quiet rural backwater, even when compared with urban centres such as Edinburgh and Glasgow. For Ebenezer Wilson's detailed stock list shows that Dumfriesshire people in the late 18th century had local purchasing access to a wide range of reading material, a picture reinforced by the books found in their homes. Moreover, it is likely that the books owned in this county could be a useful indicator to those owned by similar readers elsewhere in provincial Scotland, and indeed, may not have been so very different from books owned by city dwellers.

Booksellers and their customers

The Dumfriesshire inventories study were enriched by Wilson's contemporary stock list, allowing a comparison between the books people had in their houses and what was available in local bookshops. However, since his stock list cannot be used to link individual titles directly to individual customers, only a broad-scale comparison is possible. Moreover, a snapshot of stock at one point in time cannot provide information on customer buying patterns over time.

Chapter 4 surveyed the broad genres of books that booksellers were selling, but it did not study individual customers or their purchases in detail. References to individual purchases

can, however, readily be found among personal accounts and estate papers, and indeed among the records of numerous booksellers, as in the following letter to Perth bookseller John Bisset in 1782:

You will be so obliging as to send me the Vol. of Scots Magazine for 1771 by next weeks Carrier, the price of which I shall pay upon demand, I have all the other Vols mentioned in your Letter.⁵¹⁰

Buying a single volume a decade later may seem strange, but it is possible that the customer was missing this volume in an otherwise complete run and wanted to complete his collection. Generally, one-off purchases reveal little about the wider buying trends of individual customers, or indeed the breadth of sales across all customers. For this, more comprehensive records are needed. An example of the potential of such research is Fergus's analysis of the business records of bookseller Samuel Clay in Warwick.⁵¹¹ Here a unique combination of records allowed a detailed survey not just of a bookseller and his customers and their buying patterns, but also of the books that the same customers were borrowing from the associated circulating library.

There is no comparable example of a bookseller with combined bookselling and library lending records during this period in Scotland. However bookselling at least can be explored through the detailed account book of Kilmarnock bookseller James Meuros covering the years 1809 to 1819.⁵¹² Cash sales in the shop would not generally have been recorded, a problem that Fergus also ran into with the bookselling records she analysed.⁵¹³ However purchases placed on account were recorded, and the purchases of 153 different named customers are spread over 277 pages in this single volume alone. An index at the start of the volume lists the pages used to record the purchases for each customer, and each

⁵¹⁰ Perth and Kinross Council Archive, B59/37/2/2/1, bundle of letters including one from Robert Menzies to John Bisset, 1782 October 18.

⁵¹¹ Fergus, 'Eighteenth-Century Readers in Provincial England'. This analysis was later extended into book form in Fergus, *Provincial Readers in Eighteenth-Century England*.

⁵¹² NAS, CS96/628/1.

⁵¹³ Fergus, 'Eighteenth-Century Readers in Provincial England', pp. 160–162.

portion of a customer's account records where it carries on from and where it is continued later in the account book.

The name James Meuros is famous in Scottish bookselling history because a bookseller of that name was involved in an important copyright trial in the 1770s which settled the issue of perpetual copyright.⁵¹⁴ According to the *Scottish Book Trade Index*, this James Meuros traded in Kilmarnock between 1742 and 1819.⁵¹⁵ However a gravestone in Kilmarnock High Churchyard suggests that the copyright Meuros died in 1796 and that by the date of the surviving account book the business was run by a namesake son.⁵¹⁶ According to the *Scottish Book Trade Index*, there was at least one other bookseller operating in Kilmarnock in the first decade of the 19th century, and Meuros's account book reveals another two Kilmarnock booksellers.⁵¹⁷ In addition, Meuros would have faced competition from booksellers in other Ayrshire towns, as well as in the rapidly growing centre of Glasgow. As in Dumfriesshire, more informal booksellers would include chapmen and general merchants also selling reading material, though on a smaller scale.

From Meuros's account book, it is clear that he was not just a bookseller, but as was often the case offered related services, specifically bookbinding and stationery sales. Of the 153 accounts in the book, 22 refer to stationery sales alone. Customers include a number of local businesses in town, as well as others local and further afield buying ink.⁵¹⁸ The other 131 customer accounts usually included stationery sales as well, but—significantly for the purposes of this thesis—also included references to people buying reading material, or

⁵¹⁴ R. Deazley, *On the Origin of the Right to Copy: Charting the Movement of Copyright Law in Eighteenth Century Britain (1695–1775)* (Oxford, 2004), p. 179.

⁵¹⁵ The Scottish Book Trade Index (<http://www.nls.uk/catalogues/resources/sbti/>).

⁵¹⁶ A.G. Beattie and M.H. Beattie (eds.), *Pre-1855 Gravestone Inscriptions in Kilmarnock and Loudoun District* (Edinburgh, 1993), p. 82.

⁵¹⁷ Hugh Crawford per the SBTI and John Stewart and R. Mathie per Meuros's account book. Meuros was selling books to Stewart. Mathie is mentioned in an inserted paper advert for a cheap Ayrshire miscellany and the list of booksellers selling copies. Pigot's 1825 trade directory also records 4 booksellers operating in Kilmarnock.

⁵¹⁸ For example Messrs J. Thomson Junr & Co of Edinburgh were buying ink from Meuros—NAS, CS96/628/1, p. 7.

bringing in books to be bound. The majority of these customers were based in Kilmarnock and the surrounding area, with smaller numbers drawn from more distant settlements such as Irvine and Troon.⁵¹⁹

Customers buying reading material on account were socially diverse, ranging from gentry and nobility through to the working-class. Although the Dumfriesshire inventories also include some working-class customers, a greater proportion of Meuros's account customers are from this sector of society, closer to what would be expected population-wise, suggesting that Meuros's account book more accurately reflected book-buying in general, albeit at a later date.

⁵¹⁹ This assessment is based on address information recorded directly for each customer in the account book.

**Table 21: Occupations of book purchasers
in Meuros account book**

<u>occupation</u>	<u>number</u>
unspecified	23
gentry or nobility	15
schoolmaster or teacher	9
minister	8
writer	8
surgeon	6
merchant	5
bookseller	4
wright	4
banker	3
carpet manufacturer	3
colliery	3
grocer	3
library	3
nurseryman	3
army	2
currier	2
flesher	2
nobility	2
shoemaker	2
cabinet maker, carrier, druggist, dyer, gamekeeper, glover, hairdresser, innkeeper, mason, messenger, painter, plasterer, post master, printer, skinner, tallow chandler, tanner, tinsmith, town clerk, watchmaker	1 each

Source: Derived from NAS, CS96/628/1.

**Table 22: Categorising occupations of
book purchasers in Meuros account book**

artisans/tradesmen	39 (29.8%)
professionals	36 (27.5%)
gentry	17 (13.0%)
merchants	5 (3.8%)
military	2 (1.5%)
other/unspecified	32 (24.4%)
Total	131

Source: see Table 21.

Artisans and tradesmen are the largest group recorded, at nearly 30%, and might have been even higher if some of the unspecified occupations also fell into this category. This is a sizeable minority, and indicates that Meuros's customers covered all sectors of society. At the other end of the social spectrum, gentry and nobility ranged from the Rt Hon Earl of

Eglinton to the Mrs and Misses Hamiltons in Kilmarnock House.⁵²⁰ Professionals, however, account for over double this number, ranging from schoolmasters and teachers through to writers, surgeons and ministers, which raises the question of how many were buying work-related reading material. Certainly among the surgeons there is evidence of work-related buying, a number regularly buying medical journals: Dr John M'Kenzie in Irvine and Dr Francis Steel in Kilmarnock bought the *Edinburgh Medical Journal*; Mr John Torrance Surgeon in Kilmarnock the *London Medical Journal*; and Dr Sym and Dr Lyon both in Kilmarnock the *Quarterly Journal of Foreign Medicine*. Similarly Dr Hood in Kilmarnock brought in copies of the *Edinburgh Dispensatory* and *Falconer on the Pulse* to be bound. Among legal professionals, there is less evidence of work-related reading, but James Brown writer in Kilmarnock had a number of items bound including the Stamp Act, Bell's *Commentaries*, Russell *On Conveyancing*, and an *Index to the House of Lords* for 1808. Similarly Robert Morton writer in Kilmarnock had Erskine's *Institute of Law* bound and David Ramsay Andrews writer in Kilmarnock had a large collection of legal items bound including *Stewart's Trial*, *Bells Styles*, *Glen On Bills Law*, *Bell On Leases*, and *Juridicial Styles*. However, work-related reading material tended to be greatly outnumbered by other sales. For example, M'Kenzie also bought several legal texts, the *Edinburgh Encyclopedia*, the *Edinburgh Review*, *Monthly Repository*, and *Trend's Evening Amusements*. Similarly Brown had a number of non-work items bound including annual editions of the *Lady's Magazine*, a *Psalm Book*, Junius, and *Lady of the Lake*. It is likely that most lawyers and indeed ministers would have already owned copies of the work-related books they needed for reference purpose, whereas surgeons had to read current medical journals to keep up with the latest developments in their field.

Periodicals such as the medical journals were found in the Meuros account book more frequently than in the Dumfriesshire inventories. The different time period may be part of the reason for this: it is possible that periodicals were a more significant market presence

⁵²⁰ The Earl of Eglinton seems to have conducted his business with Meuros via variously a secretary and factor. Other lesser gentry dealt with Meuros directly.

by the early 19th century compared with the late 18th century.⁵²¹ Equally, some periodicals may have been less likely to be listed in after-death inventories, disposed off more readily over time, or considered less valuable by valuers.⁵²² Whatever the reason, the frequent references to periodicals in the Meuros account book deserve further analysis of who was buying which ones and why. Looking purely at the numbers of customer accounts referring to each periodical, it is possible to speculate about the most popular titles among this group of customers.

Table 23: Most popular periodicals in Meuros account book

<u>Title</u>	<u>Number of customers</u>
Almanack (otherwise unspecified) ⁵²³	15
Edinburgh Almanack	14
Edinburgh Review	13
Cheap Magazine	11
Christian Observer	9
Imperial Almanack	9
Coila Repository	8
General Almanack	8
Scots Magazine	8
Irvine Miscellany	7
Religious Monitor	7
Ayrshire Magazine	6
Christian Instructor	6
Farmers Magazine	6
Edinburgh Magazine	5
Evangelical Magazine	5
Glasgow Herald	4
Kilmarnock Mirror	4
Quarterly Review	4

Source: Derived from NAS, CS96/628/1.

Annual almanacks dominate the top of the table, bought by a range of customers from lawyers and bankers through to nobility and retired military men. However there were also significant numbers of local publications, including two Kilmarnock ones: the *Coila Repository*, or *Kilmarnock Monthly Magazine*, first published in 1817; and the

⁵²¹ Feather, *A History of British Publishing*, pp. 106–115 describes the growth of periodicals in 18th century Britain.

⁵²² J. de Kruif, 'Classes of readers', pp. 430–431 comments on the relative invisibility in Dutch probate inventories of some forms of reading matter.

⁵²³ The term 'Almanack' on its own in the account book may be an abbreviation for a more specific almanack e.g. Edinburgh or General. Unfortunately such a meaning cannot be deciphered now.

Kilmarnock Mirror published soon afterwards.⁵²⁴ Another notable presence is the *Cheap Magazine*, a low-cost magazine circulated widely throughout Scotland.⁵²⁵ This was an era of low-cost reprints, and Meuros's customers for this single periodical included a flesher and a tanner, presenting a very different impression of magazine buying from the Dumfriesshire after-death inventories which showed a bias towards the wealthier classes. At Meuros's bookshop, the religious periodical remained popular, with 27 customers recorded in his account book. The *Farmer's Magazine*, so popular among the Selkirk Subscription Library members, and borrowed mostly by local farmers, appealed at Meuros's bookshop far beyond the core agricultural community, to two writers, a schoolmaster, and the local landowner, Sir William Cuninghame of Caprinton.

One question raised by the sale of periodicals is whether periodical purchases were more likely to represent active reading than other forms of publication such as books. It is possible, for example, that someone buying a periodical regularly over a number of years would be more likely to be reading that than, for example, a book bought as a one-off.⁵²⁶ It is important to note, however, that we cannot always assume that the named account holder was the only, or indeed the main, reader of such purchased works. Meuros's account book includes a number of examples of magazines aimed at ladies and young people, almost certainly bought to be read by other members of the family as well.⁵²⁷ Since other works may have been shared around in a family grouping, or indeed read aloud, buying for others may also partially explain the small number of female account holders. Perhaps present among Meuros's customers, but concealed in the account book behind recorded husbands and fathers holding the accounts, were women readers. Thus Meuros's account book may

⁵²⁴ A. M'Kay, *The History of Kilmarnock* (Kilmarnock, 1858), p. 177.

⁵²⁵ W.J. Couper, *The Millers of Haddington, Dunbar and Dunfermline: a record of Scottish bookselling* (London, 1914), pp. 118–129.

⁵²⁶ Although perhaps not in the case of annual almanacs, though these too could be read to be used, but a different form of reading from cover to cover.

⁵²⁷ Examples include the appropriately named *Lady's Magazine* and *Youth's Magazine*, the former printed from 1770 onwards, the latter a more recent publication dating from 1805.

under represent the extent of female reading, but as library records do not track where borrowed books were shared, we cannot be certain.⁵²⁸

Purchasing for others is evident in the case of schoolbooks, an aspect of reading almost totally missing from after-death inventories. Wilson's 1788 stock list highlighted the importance of schoolbooks to a provincial bookseller's trade, and Meuros's account book suggests that little had changed quarter of a century later. Popular schoolbooks also appear in the accounts of schoolmasters. For example William Clark, schoolmaster in Irvine, bought 159 copies of *British Spelling* as well as smaller quantities of arithmetic books between 1813 and 1816. Similarly, William Gemmill, teacher in Fenwick, regularly bought multiple copies of Scott's *Dictionary* as well as smaller quantities of spelling books, arithmetic books and grammars. These teachers probably sold such schoolbooks onto their pupils. Parents buying schoolbooks directly from the bookshop for their children are harder to spot but several can be detected, including John Thomson carpet manufacturer in Kilmarnock, whose succession of growing children seem to have come into the bookshop in turn to pick up schoolbooks, all paid for on account.⁵²⁹

⁵²⁸ See Chapter 3 for a discussion of sharing books in a family setting and Chapter 4 for an analysis of a library's borrowing records where, unusually, borrowing for others to read appears to be recorded.

⁵²⁹ This was almost certainly the same John Thomson who according to the Kilmarnock parish registers married Margaret Allan and had at least 11 children including Robert (1799), John (1802), James (1804), Thomas (1805), Euphemia (1807), Matthew (1809) and Margaret (1811).

Table 24: Siblings collecting schoolbooks in turn per Meuros account book

<u>Sale date</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Child collecting</u>
1812 Apr 20	Cicero's Orations	Robert
1812 May 15	Scott's Collection	James
1812 Jun 8	Scott's Dictionary	John
1812 Oct 12	Livii	Robert
1813 Apr 28	New Testament	Euphemia
1813 May 12	Mason's Spell: Book	Euphemia
1813 Jun 7	Scott's Lessons N.E.	Thomas
1813 Oct 18	Barrie's Collection	Euphemia
1813 Oct 20	Mason's Spell:	Euphemia
1814 Jun 6	Murray's Grammar	James
1814 Jul 17	Corn Nepos	James
1814 Jul 19	Common Bible	Euphemia
1814 Sep 7	Barrie's Collection	Thomas
1815 Jun 7	Scott's Lessons N.E.	Euphemia
1816 Sep 25	Mason's Spell: Book	Matthew
1816 Oct 14	Common Bible	Matthew
1817 Apr 28	Mason's Spell. Book	Margaret
1817 Aug 27	Barrie's Collection	Matthew
1818 May 11	Barrie's Collection	Margaret
1818 May 18	Scott's Lessons	Matthew
1819 Apr 12	Barrie's Collection	Matthew ⁵³⁰

Source: NAS, CS96/628/1.

Reading of a lighter nature was represented by some of the latest popular titles. Ten of Meuros's customers had copies of Burns, and 9 Scott, though more typically his poetry rather than the Waverley novels. Generally novels were notable by their absence, raising the question of whether people were more likely to borrow them from circulating libraries rather than buy copies, and at this time there was at least one circulating library in Kilmarnock.⁵³¹ Moreover, some of Meuros's customers could have drawn on facilities in other local towns, or even Glasgow. However novels were not the only popular genre notable by their relative absence. Histories and voyages and travels, both popular around the turn of the century, were little represented. Lieut. Col. White of Cessnock had a collection of military campaigns and related travels, perhaps reflecting his own army travels and interests. Similarly William Samson, nurseryman in Kilmarnock, brought in a 6-volume set of Rollin's *Ancient History* to be bound. However, these were exceptions, and

⁵³⁰ NAS, CS96/628/1, pp. 30, 119, 169 and 235.

⁵³¹ Fergus for example found that people were more likely to borrow novels rather than buy them—Fergus, 'Eighteenth-Century Readers in Provincial England', p. 169. The Library History Database (<http://www.r-alston.co.uk/scotland.htm>) cites Robert Mathie's Circulating Library in Kilmarnock in 1816 per the *Air Advertiser*.

generally history books and voyages and travels only tended to be mentioned in the account book within larger collections, perhaps suggesting that widespread interest in such subjects had started to wane in favour of newer genres.

One traditional genre of reading material that is striking by its repeated presence in the account book was religion. Religious periodicals were among the most frequently recorded, and titles sold included *Christian Herald*, *Christian Instructor*, *Christian Observer*, *Evangelical Magazine*, *Freethinking Christians Magazine*, *Jewish Expositor*, *Jewish Repository*, *Methodist Magazine*, *Missionary Magazine*, *Religious Monitor* and *Theological Magazine*. Customers of such periodicals frequently bought religious books such as bibles and collections of sermons. Indeed out of the 131 customers of books and periodicals, 33 bought predominantly religious works. Admittedly these included three ministers, but the vast majority of religious purchasers were laity. In addition, the religious buyers had a different occupational pattern to Meuros's account customers in general, for they included a higher number of tradesmen.⁵³² This suggests that there was indeed a greater appetite for purchasing religious reading material among working-class customers, indeed often virtually to the exclusion of anything else.

Religious-related buying may have been significant for a number of the working-class customers, but at the other end of the social spectrum, the account book provides evidence of significant collection building towards a library of books. Whereas the inventories showed the results of buying books over a lifetime, the account book showed several individuals actively buying large numbers of books over a much shorter period. Although only a glimpse of the scale of their collections is possible, the volume of books bought or bound over a short period, together with the financial investment in them, suggests a considerable appetite for book buying. All but one of these people were significant lairds.

⁵³² Such tradesmen included a watchmaker, a tanner, a glover, two wrights, a shoemaker, a grocer, a skinner, a mason, a tallow chandler, and a tinsmith.

Table 25: Larger-scale purchasers in Meuros account book

<u>Person</u>	<u>Titles bought</u>	<u>Subjects represented</u>
Robert Glasgow Esqr. Mountgreenan and Mrs Glasgow	178	history, science, economics, reviews, poetry, novels, reviews, voyages and travels
Mr John M'Cubbin, Kilmarnock (Bank)	61	religion, law, economics, magazines
Lieut. Col. White, Cessnock	60	voyages and travels, history, poetry, novels, encyclopediae, reviews, music
Mrs & Misses Hamiltons, Kilmarnock House	37	religion, poetry, voyages and travels, letters, memoirs, reference works, history, magazines

Source: Derived from NAS, CS96/628/1.

By contrast with the earlier Dumfriesshire collectors, these 19th century collectors often bought the latest publications. This is most notable in the example of Robert Glasgow who, with his wife, was buying numerous newly published works of poetry and novels, including the works of Burns, Byron, Scott and Austen, as they were published. It is likely that the couple already had a large established library, and Meuros's account book shows how it was being extended. Books in this era were frequently bought unbound and could be bound to varying standards and styles to suit the requirements and pockets of individual customers.⁵³³ In this way, local booksellers could target the largest-scale book collectors, presumably competing in terms of quality with the best Edinburgh bookshops. Convenience may also have been a significant factor: the ability to go into the bookshop to discuss the type of binding to be done, as well as to collect the books directly rather than rely on the vagaries of a long-distance postal system. There remains, however, the big question mark of how much these books in larger collections were actually read, rather than bought as luxury items.

Although many of the customers buying on account were professionals, gentry or nobility, there were significant numbers of working-class customers, so the account book provides an important corrective to the impression given purely by inventory studies. For example,

⁵³³ R. Banham, 'The Industrialization of the Book 1800–1970' in S. Eliot and J. Rose (eds.), *A Companion to the History of the Book* (Oxford, 2007), p. 280.

the importance of periodicals appears from the account book whereas it is underestimated by inventories due to their low value. Similarly, the frequency of book buying for school-age readers is stressed, something mirrored by contemporary booksellers' stock but invisible when looking at inventories of adult readers. Moreover, the continuing importance of religious books highlighted in the Dumfriesshire collections is reflected in the Meuros account book, where a significant number of customers, particularly working-class, were still buying predominantly religious works. The growing importance of evangelicalism in 19th century society may have contributed towards this.⁵³⁴ Another similarity between the two sources is the building of large collections of books, most clearly seen in the after-death inventory lists of books. The account book demonstrates the capability of local booksellers to compete with the best Edinburgh booksellers, catering for customers with even the largest and most demanding collections.

Book ownership versus reading

Meuros's account book is valuable as a sequential record of book buying, showing trends over a period rather than a snapshot of book ownership in time. However the question still remains how much people actually read the books that they owned, and, indeed, how good a guide the books owned were to someone's wider reading patterns. Two useful records can shed light on these questions. The reading list of Professor Robert Hamilton, which covered approximately 40 years between circa 1790 and 1829, was complemented by a list of books owned by Hamilton shortly before he died, thus providing the opportunity to compare and contrast the two.⁵³⁵ Admittedly this is a highly singular source, but it provides an unrivalled opportunity to compare the books that one man owned with the books he was reading.

⁵³⁴ C.G. Brown, *The social history of religion in Scotland since 1730* (London, 1987), p. 136.

⁵³⁵ University of Aberdeen Special Libraries and Archives, MS457 part 3, Robert Hamilton papers, pp. 487–538. Thanks to Dr Iain Beavan of Special Libraries and Archives, University of Aberdeen for directing me towards this source.

Chapter 4 discussed Hamilton's reading list in detail. Recapping briefly this list recorded him reading a great variety of subjects, with a strong interest in novels, and little evidence of work-related reading. In terms of sourcing his reading material, the reading list revealed that Hamilton tended to borrow novels from circulating libraries, and mathematics, economics and classics books from the university collections.⁵³⁶ Library borrowing accounted for over half of the recorded sources. Another third of books read were sourced from individuals, with Hamilton either borrowing books from people or reading while he was visiting them. In this way he accessed a wider range of books than he would have had access to in his own private library alone.

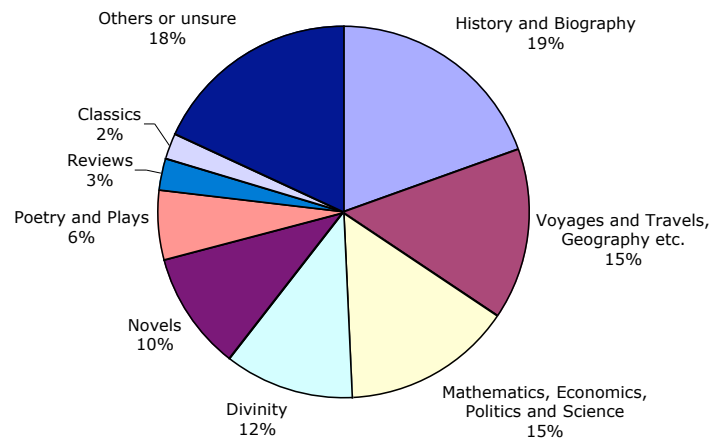


Figure 11: Variety of subjects read by Professor Robert Hamilton⁵³⁷

REI: religion 14%, entertainment 20%, improvement 66%

Source: Derived from University of Aberdeen Special Libraries and Archives, MS457 part 3, Robert Hamilton papers, pp. 487–538.

⁵³⁶ Although circulating libraries are traditionally associated with novels they typically provided a range of reading material and I. Beavan, “‘All New Works of Interest Received on Publication’: Aberdeen and its Access to the Printed Word, 1800–1850”, in T. Brotherstone and D.J. Withrington (eds.), *The City and its Worlds: Aspects of Aberdeen's History since 1794* (Glasgow, 1996), pp. 96–97 notes that such a mix was necessary for success locally, citing Brown and Burnett's long-running circulating library stocking one third novels and the rest non-fiction. This matches exactly Hamilton's borrowings from this library in the 1810s: 20 novels out of 60 items in total.

⁵³⁷ A fifth of the books could not be confidently categorised, hence the substantial ‘Others or Unsure’ category. Despite this it is likely that the categorisable books give a representative impression of the spread by subjects.

In January 1825 Hamilton drew up a list of the books that he owned, recording for each one its title, date and place of publication, and where the book was physically stored (e.g. 'Press I. Shelf 1st. Folios & Quartos').⁵³⁸ 419 items were recorded, and their titles reveal a different balance of subject matter from his reading list.

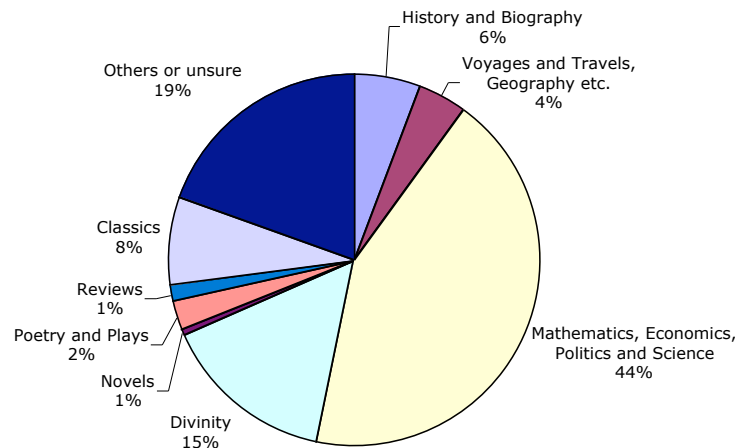


Figure 12: Variety of subjects owned by Professor Robert Hamilton

REI: religion 16%, entertainment 3%, improvement 81%

Source: Derived from University of Aberdeen Special Libraries and Archives, MS36/65, Robert Hamilton papers.

Work-related titles were much more prominent in the list of books owned, together with a core library of classics and religious books as well as self-education texts such as history and biography, and voyages and travels. Hamilton owned few novels, poetry and plays, or reviews, even though they accounted for nearly a quarter of his reading. The proportions of religious books recorded in both lists are similar. The key difference in the REI percentages is the differing balance between entertainment and improvement books: the former more likely to be read than owned, the latter owned in even greater quantities than the reading list alone would have suggested would be the case. Indeed, comparing the

⁵³⁸ University of Aberdeen Special Libraries and Archives, MS36/65, Robert Hamilton papers. The list is written on 14 pages formed from 4 folded sheets of paper.

figures directly Hamilton owned 17% less entertainment than he read, 2% more religion, and 15% more improvement books, indicating where he was willing to invest his money.

The list of books owned also recorded publication date, giving an approximate guide to when Hamilton acquired the books and providing a view of how the collection of books changed over time. Among the older books are the many classics (particularly Latin texts, grammars, and translations), some 17th century, almost all published before 1770. Some may have been family books, others that Hamilton bought himself, but three were prize books that he won at school, each annotated in the list with 'Premiums recd at High School Edinr'.⁵³⁹ Also older were his mathematics books, over two-thirds of which were published before 1800, and half of those before 1770. Most were textbooks covering traditional branches of mathematics such as algebra, arithmetic, geometry and trigonometry, but there were also more exotic variants, navigation, games (chess and card games), and Carwitham's illustrated book of floor decorations.⁵⁴⁰ A similar pattern emerges from the 28 science books covering subjects such as astronomy, botany, geography. Almost all of these date from before 1800 and mostly from the 1750s and 1760s, probably back to Hamilton's youth.

A striking mix of old and new can be detected in the religious books with a small number of them old enough to have belonged to Hamilton's grandfather, William Hamilton (1669–1732), Professor of Divinity and Principal of Edinburgh University: indeed the list includes a pamphlet copy of 'Profr Wm Hamiltons Sermon'. More recently, Hamilton's uncle Robert Hamilton (1707–1787) had been a Professor of Divinity at Edinburgh University and could also have left books to his nephew. A third of the religious books, however, were more recent, however, published after 1800, particularly books of sermons which he was buying and reading until the 1820s. His obituary described his faith as

⁵³⁹ University of Aberdeen Special Libraries and Archives, MS36/65, Robert Hamilton papers, p. 3.

⁵⁴⁰ *Various Kinds of Floor Decorations represented both in plans and perspective. Being useful designs for ornamenting the floors of halls, rooms, summer houses ... in twenty four copper plates* and published in 1739 per British Library catalogue.

‘rational, fervent, and unostentatious; and his attention to the duties of Christianity uniform and unceasing’.⁵⁴¹ The penultimate item on Hamilton’s reading list was Thomas Wright’s *Farewell to time*, a collection of devotional exercises based on Scripture intended to be ‘used by the sick and by those who minister to them’. It is possible that he knew he was dying and read this as a way of preparing for death.⁵⁴²

Other later purchases included most of his 69 economics books with two-thirds published after 1800 and most after 1815. These included standard works such as Smith’s *Wealth of Nations*, numerous treatises on political economy, and a significant number of parliamentary reports relevant to Hamilton’s work.⁵⁴³ Also of this period were the few history and biography books owned by Hamilton including multi-volume standards Rollin’s 10-volume *Universal History*, Voltaire’s 3-volume *Universal History*, Hume’s *History of England* and Robertson’s *History of Charles V*. Scottish history was well represented with histories by Buchanan, Burnett and Lindsay of Pitscottie, as well as Orem and Wilson’s histories of Aberdeen, and of personal interest John Anderson’s *Historical and genealogical memoirs of the House of Hamilton*. From further afield, his collection included histories of Switzerland, Portugal, Florence, and Sweden, and a small number of voyages and travels books, mostly after 1800, and with a particular focus on India.

Hamilton owned few novels, despite reading them in substantial quantities, and the only novels on the list are *Don Quixote*, the *Vicar of Wakefield*, and *Humphrey Clinker*, albeit the latter two were noted as belonging to his daughter Anne.⁵⁴⁴ Poetry is more evident with Hamilton owning an 8-volume edition of Shakespeare’s Works, Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, Pope’s works, the *Poems of Ossian*, Shirreff’s poems, and the locally-published poems

⁵⁴¹ *Aberdeen Journal*, 1829 July 22, p. 3.

⁵⁴² Other books near the end were typically diverse: travel books about Italy, Russia and Persia; Chambers’ *Traditions of Edinburgh*; and novel *Zilla a Jewish Tale*.

⁵⁴³ Hamilton had copies of ‘Finance Reports presented to Parliament’ between 1811 and 1823 as well as 1819 reports by parliamentary committees on Finance and the ‘Resumption of Cash payments’.

⁵⁴⁴ Anne’s books are noted on the shelf-by-shelf list but have been excluded from the statistical calculations of Hamilton’s books by subject and total.

by Christian Milne.⁵⁴⁵ But his daughter owned more, including Thomson's *Seasons* and numerous poems by Scott: *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, *Marmion*, *Lady of the Lake*, *Vision of Don Roderick*, and *Rokeby*. Also little present in the list of items owned are reviews or magazines, although Hamilton read them in great numbers. He owned back issues of the *Spectator*, *Critical Review*, *Annual Register*, and the *Scots Magazine*—few of them recent with the *Scots magazine* issues dating from the 1730s–1770s. Only two volumes of the Royal Society of Edinburgh were relatively recent (1799 and 1809).

Hamilton's list of books owned reveals how he stored his books, thus providing more clues to the different ways they were used. A small number of the books were 'left at Eastfield' but most were kept in two cupboards ('Press I' and 'Press II'), presumably in his Marischal College home, and the list recorded the books shelf-by-shelf. The larger books were listed in shelf 1, suggesting that they were at the bottom with the shelves numbered from bottom to top, and the following shelf-by-shelf contents for each press emerges:

Press I

daughter Anne's books / Political Economy
History / Economics
Sermons / other Religion / Miscellaneous
History / Latin & Greek books
(octavo from now on) Classics / Sermons
Scots Magazine 1730s–1770s
(folio and quarto) Religion / Dictionaries / Mathematics
+ not on shelves: Road maps & atlas

Press II

Mathematics / Sermons / Poems / Voyages and Travels
Mathematics and related subjects
Mathematics and related subjects
Mathematics and related subjects
Education / Aberdeen & other varied books
'Reserved for Books not belonging to me. Part of them belong to Mrs Hamilton & Miss Hamilton.'
(folio and quarto) Mathematics / Economics

Table 26: Professor Robert Hamilton's physical storage of books by subject

Source: Derived from University of Aberdeen Special Libraries and Archives, MS36/65, Robert Hamilton papers.

⁵⁴⁵ The *Dictionary of National Biography* entry for Christian Milne observes that the preface to her 1805 book of poems described her as the 'female Bard of Aberdeen'.

The first press, varied in terms of content, reflected Hamilton's wide reading interests as well as housing his extensive collection of religious and classics books. The second press was more dedicated to his work, with other subjects squeezed in. The shelf for books not belonging to him may have been used to store books borrowed from other people and libraries, as well as books belonging to his family. In his book about English readers at the same period, Allan observed that it is likely that 'the most intensively used books were [shelved] in the most accessible and most visible positions.'⁵⁴⁶ This was likely to be true of Hamilton, since books on his favourite subjects were stored on upper shelves, near at hand, and similarly books he needed to consult frequently for work.

The overriding impression is of a largely traditional collection, heavily biased towards work-related books. A number of the items had been bought recently but most had probably been bought decades earlier, resulting in a large collection built up over a long lifetime. Many of the books—particularly the academic treatises—would have provided valuable reference material for Hamilton in his university work, but it seems unlikely that he would read them more frequently. By contrast, his separate reading list reveals an extensive recreational reading taste, one satisfied by accessing books through friends and family, and borrowing from local libraries. The indication is that Hamilton would read poetry and novels, but was not prepared to buy them. In his reading taste, Hamilton seems to have echoed the time he lived in, and the picture painted is of an enthusiastic reader making concerted efforts to access books. In terms of his access to restricted university collections, however, Hamilton was untypical for his time. However his use of circulating libraries for popular books such as novels is more typical and it is likely that other eager readers with similar facilities would have read similarly widely, reaching far beyond the books they owned.

⁵⁴⁶ D. Allan, *Making British Culture: English Readers and the Scottish Enlightenment, 1740–1830* (New York and Oxon, 2008), p. 92.

Conclusions

This chapter examined the relationship between book ownership and reading in Scotland. It was not practical for this thesis to investigate book ownership across the whole of Scotland, but local case studies and unique records revealed the types of books people owned, an important issue to look at since books owned had been found to be important for readers, particularly in their early reading experiences. In addition, it was possible to reflect on how much book ownership accurately reflected broader reading tastes.

The Dumfriesshire testaments and the detailed inventories within them revealed that book ownership at this time was more widespread than past studies of after-death inventories have suggested. Books were listed in over a third of detailed Dumfriesshire after-death inventories of personal possessions, and it is likely that they were even more commonplace than that. Nor were the owners of those books confined to the leisured classes, but included farmers and a significant number of working-class individuals. In addition, book owners were found throughout Dumfriesshire, rather than just in urban settlements.

Over time, the books listed in these inventories changed from predominantly religious subjects in the 1750s (for example just the Bible), to a more varied and secular mix by the 1790s and early 1800s, as well as a greater quantity of books per owner. However, people would still tend to own a copy of the Bible, even if it was now likely to be accompanied by other reading matter. Work-related reasons for buying books were also important, particularly for the professionals, but the Dumfriesshire inventories also illustrate a growing presence of improvement and entertainment books. Many of the books owned were relatively traditional, for example the classics, or works from the Old Canon, which became widely available from the 1770s onwards. Other books owned had obvious Enlightenment connotations—such as titles by Voltaire or Hume, but the broader Enlightenment spirit was reflected in reference works, and, above all, histories, especially those in the new narrative form. Equally, parallels between Scottish and British culture can

be detected in the publications Dumfriesshire people owned, particularly in the number of periodicals. Many of the collections in the inventories were relatively small, but some were very large, reflecting the role of books as valuable objects to be acquired and collected. How books were stored is also hinted at in the inventories, with occasional references to book furniture and dedicated library spaces. Likewise, larger collections raised the question of where the books were bought, and records of local booksellers in Dumfries and surrounding areas show how they could have supplied all but the most specialist books found in the private libraries.

The Meuros account book from Kilmarnock provided an alternative view of book buying, in some ways a more complete one, albeit covering a shorter period, because inventories focused on the more valuable possessions. This record was from a later period, between 1809 and 1819. Again, it showed evidence of work-related buying, although now more commonly in the form of medical journals bought by surgeons and physicians. It is likely that most of Meuros's professional customers—including medical men, lawyers and ministers—had already invested in the core books they needed for work purposes, and so such publications were less likely to be recorded. By contrast, periodicals are more visible in the Meuros record than in the Dumfriesshire inventories, possibly reflecting a greater appreciation for them by this time, but also reflecting how a more ephemeral and less valuable form of publication could be under-represented in after-death inventories. School books were well represented, mirroring the earlier stock lists of booksellers such as Ebenezer Wilson in Dumfries in 1788. Generally, contemporary after-death inventories under-represented this aspect of reading. Although Scott's *Waverley* novels showed up occasionally, as did his earlier poems along with a significant quantity of people buying the popular poems of Burns, novels, including Scott's, were present only in small numbers, supporting the theory that people were more likely to borrow these than to buy them. In terms of the traditional subjects, history was less visible in the Meuros record, and may even have been in decline by this late in the period. By contrast, religious publications appear to have been very important for many of Meuros's customers, including a sizeable

number of his working-class customers, who often bought little else. His customer-base was particularly diverse, with many professionals and gentry, but also a substantial number of working-class customers. The high proportion of artisans and tradesmen supports the impression of widespread book ownership and related reading practices through all ranks.

The greater quantity of periodicals recorded in the Meuros record may reflect a particularly active form of reading, with the same periodical bought regularly over time and each new issue read eagerly by its buyers. However, there is always a question over who the reading material was aimed at, especially since the account holder could buy books and periodicals for other members of their family to read. This is seen most vividly in the example of a father with seven children coming into Meuros's bookshop in turn to pick up their schoolbooks paid for on their father's account. Fortunately in this example, the children are recorded as collectors of the books probably intended for them. This would not always be the case, raising the question of how many more hidden 'other' readers were concealed behind bookselling records. This situation is comparable to library borrowing records where one member of the family could borrow a book from the library to be shared with or used exclusively by one or more relatives. Again, the question remains how much items bought were read, by whom, and how good a guide books owned are to general reading habits. Although buying for show was likely to be limited to those with means, therefore we can conclude that many books bought were bought to be read.

Fortunately the unique record of both reading and book ownership kept by Professor Robert Hamilton (1743-1829) in Aberdeen allowed these tricky questions to be explored. His recreational reading was markedly different from his ownership of books, and the books that he owned were a poor guide to it. To an extent this discrepancy may be partly due to his circumstances, and the time that he lived in: Hamilton was fortunate to be an enthusiastic reader in a time and place with good access to libraries as well as having friends and relatives to borrow books from. Had he lived earlier in the period, the situation might have been very different, and the books that he owned—possibly a much smaller

number—a better guide to probably narrower and more intensive reading habits. In general it is likely, having considered the surviving evidence for book ownership and the comparative example of Hamilton, that the books owned in Scottish houses lagged behind wider reading trends, tending to be more traditional and work-oriented, under-representing the growing extent of novel readership, even though books owned at home were important for reading opportunities, particularly in early life.

In terms of chronology the Dumfriesshire inventories provide the clearest picture of change over time, namely the marked shift over the latter half of the 18th century from largely religious books to a more varied and, indeed, secular mix by the end. The Meuros account book extends this picture into the early decades of the 19th century, not only in the diverse range of subject matter, but also in the wide variety of people buying books. Although this shift over time is broadly consistent with Engelsing's 'reading revolution', the sustained interest in religious titles by some of Meuros's customers in the early 19th century demonstrates that not everyone was reading in a purely extensive manner by that time, so that Engelsing's 'reading revolution' model cannot fully explain what was happening in Scotland.

Chapter 7: Conclusions

This thesis set out to explore reading habits in Scotland in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, teasing out information about readers both as individuals and collectively, to analyse the role that reading played in their lives. Inevitably, studying such a long period raises the larger question of how things changed over the time period, and that is the focus of this chapter. The discussion is focused primarily around the growth of reading in the period, the changing reading matter, and the permeation of reading throughout society.

A significant challenge was involved in researching an activity—reading—which is often not recorded in surviving historical records. As a consequence, the study took the form of a reconnaissance, where relevant records were analysed, both individual case studies and larger data sets, to look for recurring trends and to corroborate individual clues. Throughout, care was taken to assess how typical individual examples might have been of wider trends, bearing in mind that only a fraction of readers could be studied in-depth. Despite the need to focus on a limited number of examples there was no reason to suppose that the rest of the population would be significantly different. In addition, a subject classification scheme was introduced early on, to allow individual reading examples to be compared. Similarly, groups of readers were analysed based on their occupations, to tease out wider social patterns, and to put their reading into context.

Some changes in reading habits have been easier to chart than others. The growth in opportunities for reading during this period was dramatic. At the beginning, there were few newspapers published in Scotland, and relatively few bookshops and libraries—the latter two only found in the largest cities and a number of important provincial centres. By the end, few towns lacked a bookshop and a library; reading opportunities had increased many times over, and contemporary accounts record readers making increasing use of the new opportunities available to them. It is, however, difficult to assess the extent to which such new opportunities drove increased reading or how much they were simply responding to

demand. Both could be a factor to varying degrees. However a large number of reading venues were commercial, and needed to be viable to survive, suggesting that they were responding to demand already present in the local community, even if, by their presence, they fuelled it still further.

Contemporary evidence also records how people increasingly fitted reading into their lives. Much of this evidence concerns the way in which people first interacted with books, including the importance of positive reading experiences during childhood. Books at home—including religious works—remained particularly significant for childhood readers, some of whom were actively encouraged to read by their parents (including working-class ones), whereas others sought out books and read them on their own. Some of these childhood readers were fortunate to be able to access a wider range of reading material as their appetites for reading grew, either borrowing books from family and acquaintances, or tapping into the increasingly available libraries. Once adulthood was reached, time became more of an issue, since people had to fit in reading around work and other commitments. Indeed, the extent to which readers could control their own time dictated how much they read. Scots, both workers in town, and workers on the land and in the fields read during lunch breaks. Others squeezed in reading first thing in the morning or last thing at night, although this depended on having an adequate supply of candles. A limited number of readers were leisured, and able to devote much more time to the activity, including day time. The norm, however, seems to have been that people snatched opportunities for reading when they could. Reading aloud was also significantly common, providing both communal entertainment, for example for a family of an evening, and allowing someone to access books who had not the leisure time to stop to read themselves, or who could not read due to disability.

It has been impossible to quantify what proportion of Scottish society was actively reading during this period. There were, however, more positive references to people reading rather than negative references to people who did not. No contemporary accounts suggested that

reading was either an unusual or unwelcome activity. Indeed one account comments on how much of a ‘necessity’ reading had become in Scottish life by the end of the period, much more popular as an activity than in England.⁵⁴⁷ Judging from the borrowing records of Gray Library, about one in thirty of Haddington’s population was borrowing books from the library in the 1750s, whereas it had grown to about one in ten of the burgh population borrowing books directly by the 1810s, with even more people accessing the same books through family, friends and shared reading. Indeed the total number of people having access to reading must have been even higher, if we include the regular devotional or other communal readings, and people buying books or borrowing them from circulating libraries or from friends or from family are taken into account. It is parallel to the way that free libraries today do not cater for all the reading in their locality. Although it is impossible to put a precise figure on the proportion of Scottish people reading by the end of the period, it is likely to have been a considerable number, with reading widespread.

The other clear contrast between the start and end of the period concerns the reading matter. There was a marked shift from predominantly religious works in the mid 18th century to a predominance of improvement works and acceleration of entertainment by the early decades of the 19th. That is consistent with market trends, acknowledging the increasing importance of genres such as narrative history and the novel. This move from solely religious to a greater mix of reading is consistent with Engelsing’s ‘reading revolution’ described by reading historians researching readers in other countries. Individual readers typically demonstrated individual tastes though: both a product of the time they lived in and their own specific interests. Religious reading persisted, but the pattern by the end of the period was of the dominance of either instructive or entertainment material.

The REI analytical system used in this thesis, extensively throughout Chapters 4 and 5, reveals that the shift can be expressed in the form of a relative decline in the purchase or

⁵⁴⁷ McLeod (ed), *From Charlotte Square to Fingal’s Cave*, p. 222.

borrowing of religious books, alongside the dominance of improvement reading and the increasing popularity of entertainment books by the end of the period. For example, among provincial Scottish booksellers, the pattern changed from the mid 18th century when typically 60-70% of books stocked were religious, to the start of the 19th century when the proportion of religious books had dropped to just 25%, with 50% of books stocked being improvement texts, and the remainder entertainment, a subject category virtually invisible in the mid 18th century bookseller stock lists. Also from the start of the 19th century, the most voluminous subscription library records in Scotland, those of Selkirk Subscription Library, show an even split in borrowings between entertainment and improvement books, with religious books only accounting for 4% of borrowings. Some books were more likely to be owned than borrowed, such as religious books; where it appears that it would be unusual for a household not to have at least one copy of the Bible. Thus library records under-estimate how much religious books were read, and the extent to which this habit persisted. However since entertainment books such as novels appear to have been more likely to be borrowed than to be bought, it can be much harder to trace the extent to which they were read. These methodological challenges can be overcome by studying a combination of records, and understanding the limitations of any one type of record. However, taken together, the growth in reading opportunities, and the changing reading matter constituted a dramatic change in Scottish reading habits. Readers benefited from the rapid growth of access to a wider variety in reading choices at the same time.

The importance of books as objects to be acquired and treasured grew during the period, beginning with religious works and the family bibles. Over subsequent decades, numbers of other genres in homes grow, particularly improvement works such as history and biography, and voyages and travels, and some of the private collections built up in this way were extensive, requiring considerable investment over a lifetime. Book buying was not, however, exclusively an activity for the rich, as local booksellers also provided lower-cost editions and the evidence shows a substantial minority of working people buying books. Furthermore, there was some difference between the books people bought and what they

read: they were more likely to borrow novels than to buy them, possibly because they wanted to read more of them than they could afford to buy, or they did not think the genre worth investing in. Similarly the one instance where we can study the books that an individual owned and compare and contrast them with his separate reading record suggests that private libraries later in the period may have been more traditional than their owners' more diverse reading habits. Books in people's houses, although changing, appear to have lagged behind wider reading trends as exemplified by libraries.

Another striking feature of Scottish reading habits was the variety of reasons for reading. Improving and self-education books, which dominated both the books found in people's houses and those borrowed from local libraries, allowed readers to learn more about the world they lived in. Their immense popularity can be attributed to Enlightenment thinking and ideas—an eagerness to learn about the modern world, its society and its people—even if only very few were key Enlightenment texts. The growing fondness for reading as entertainment, however, coincided with the rise of the novel, as novels appeared increasingly in lists of books people were reading. Evidence for work-related reading is less common, and mostly for specific occupations such as lawyers, clergy and medical men who had cause to consult specialist texts as part of their work. It is likely that such individuals owned work-related books, but their reading of them was only occasionally recorded. Religious and devotional reading proved very hard to detect in records of reading. Nevertheless, it is a conclusion of this thesis that religious reading at home persisted throughout the period. Generally, reasons for reading were complex and suited different needs at different times. This was particularly the case by the end of the period when the diversity of genres read and reasons for reading were in stark contrast to the simpler picture 70 years earlier.

This presents a broad picture of developments in Scottish reading habits, but it is also important to be sensitive to variations within society. For example, as one might expect, town dwellers were better catered for than rural dwellers in terms of facilities for reading,

since libraries, bookshops and reading rooms were usually located in towns. Where it was simply too far practically to travel to go to the nearest library, or good bookshop, rural dwellers were more dependent upon other means of accessing books and other reading material, either through the informal lending of books between acquaintances, or the visits of chapmen and pedlars. Although some contemporary accounts of readers hint at difficulties in accessing reading material, they invariably stress positive examples of reading habits.

The impact of social class on reading habits is harder to delineate, although some aspects are clear enough. Cost was an issue, both in purchasing books and borrowing books from libraries, limiting the extent to which lower-class readers could access reading material. Lower-cost editions of books were available, and books and newspapers could be shared around, or bought secondhand. However a shortage of money would certainly restrict some people from accessing reading material as much as others, or from building up their own private library. Moreover, some subscription libraries restricted their membership, usually to professionals, gentry or other middling sorts, whilst comparable moves among the working-class to set up reading groups, for example the working-class reading societies in Paisley in the 1790s, went some way to redress the balance. That these were separate from the middle-class societies suggests that different classes did not mingle in their reading activities. Perhaps the only place where different groups of readers could encounter each other was the bookshop. However, different classes bought different things, those buying religious material only (religious magazines, bibles or collections of sermons) comprising an unusually high proportion of the working-class, indicating a greater appetite for religious reading among this group. Overall, however, it appears that, given the opportunity, different sectors of society were interested in reading much the same things in much the same proportions. Indeed, it is an important conclusion of this thesis that reading as an activity permeated deeply throughout society, increasing the proportion of the population who were actively reading, far beyond the confines of leisured classes. For example, the Gray Library borrowers at the end of the period included 42% from the

artisans/tradesmen group, a sizeable minority emphasising the spread of reading throughout all of the local community. Similarly, 29.8% of Meuros's account customers in Kilmarnock at the same period can be identified as artisans/tradesmen, and the true proportion may have been even higher, if unrecorded occupations could be discovered. Even the middle-class subscription libraries which restricted their membership allowed some mingling between different groups, and included a minority of subscribers who were tradesmen, farmers or maritime workers: accounting for 24% of the subscribers at Hawick, and 26% at Arbroath. Likewise, the 18th century after-death inventories of personal possessions, which might be expected to be biased more towards the wealthier sectors of society, reveal a group of book owners of which at least 20.5% were artisans/tradesmen, and another 1.3% servants. It is true that wealthier individuals, such as the landed gentry, were the most likely to build up large collections and private libraries, and also to buy magazines from an early date. However, all sectors of society bought, and presumably read, books. Indeed, it may be reasonable to assume that less wealthy people would be more likely to buy their books to read, rather than to have them purely as ornamentation which they could ill afford.

Gender as a potential axis of difference is harder to distinguish in the records, although some clues emerged from Gray Library where male readers favoured self-education, whereas female ones favoured entertainment such as fiction and poetry and plays. Nonetheless, the most popular titles at Gray Library were popular with both genders, and evidence elsewhere shows male readers borrowing novels heavily and some female readers self-educating themselves. The other hint of a possible gender difference concerns the experience of the young Mary Somerville, whose aunt disapproved of her reading when she should be learning more useful female skills such as sewing. To some extent, this lack of relevant references is a consequence of the underlying methodological approach taken in this thesis, relying on sources which by their very nature have varying coverage of different groups, with some readers, such as female readers, more invisible in the historical record than others. Nevertheless, looking for recurring patterns allowed broader trends to

be teased out, and provided new insights into Scottish reading habits which would have been impossible without taking this approach.

Frustratingly, some of the more interesting questions about reading habits remain unanswered. Was it more acceptable for a professional man to have his nose in a book than a labouring man, and if so when and what type of book? That some people read in secret, typically children trying to avoid disapproval from older relatives about their choice of reading matter, indicates that it was an activity that could be contentious. Yet references to disapproval are too few to tease out wider attitudes. Similarly, we cannot quantify, even from contemporary diaries, how much time people typically spent reading, and whether that increased over the period. Haddington's Gray Library borrowing records show townspeople returning to the library more frequently later in the period, but are no guide to the total amount of time people spent reading outside their library visits. 18th and 19th century issues of the *Scots Magazine* may shed light on both of these questions, and the possibility that further answers might be forthcoming in future remains.

As noted earlier, Scottish reading habits in this period reflected broad changes detectable in other western countries, with a shift from people reading predominantly religious works early on, to a more diverse range of subject matter later. Beyond this broad similarity, though, it is difficult to compare Scottish reading habits with those in other countries, including England, due to the lack of directly comparable research. However, one can argue for a number of distinctive features of Scottish reading habits, which may not have been found to the same extent elsewhere. The greater popularity of reading in Scotland than England was noted by contemporaries at the end of the period, and has already been commented on in this chapter. Such a difference between the two countries is particularly surprising because commercial circulating libraries—those libraries which might be assumed to have followed market demand from readers most closely—were slower to take off north of the Border, possibly due to lower population figures in Scottish towns driving the specialisation of services at a different rate than in England. Scottish readers may have

been happier to read their books at home, or to read the often worthy and informative tomes favoured by subscription libraries. Alternatively, as suggested in Chapter 3, reading as an activity in Scotland may have increased dramatically towards the end of the period, reflecting the rapid growth in reading opportunities occurring at the same time, although any such theory would also have to be understood alongside Macky's evidence from the start of the 18th century for greater devotional reading in Scotland than in England. More likely, it was probably a combination to varying degrees of all of the above factors. Whatever the reasons, Scots were reading more than their English counterparts by the end, even if, frustratingly, it is impossible to estimate what proportion of the Scottish population this involved. The dominance of improvement books by the end of the period, not just in library borrowings but also in books sold by booksellers, has already been discussed, and was another distinctive feature of Scottish reading habits, possibly a legacy in Scotland of Enlightenment thinking, even if many of the books read were not key Enlightenment texts, but still reflected Enlightenment ideas. Yet, devotional reading persisted in Scotland throughout this period, even though it is under-represented in some records of reading such as library borrowings, but more strongly recorded in experiential records such as diaries and memoirs. Devotional reading has not attracted much attention from scholars looking at England, which would be surprising if it was as persistent a presence as in Scotland. It would be unwise to conclude that devotional reading was more popular in Scotland than in England, but the implications are that it may have been.

Overall, this thesis has demonstrated a considerable increase in the habits of book borrowing and sharing, book ownership, and—above all—of reading in Scotland during this period, not just confined to the leisured classes, but extending throughout all levels of society. We know how Scottish people accessed books, how they fitted reading into their daily lives, and for what purposes they were reading. For all classes a substantial change over time in what people were reading and the subject matter of books in their homes can be discerned, and understood within a Scottish context as well as British and European

ones. Overall, the growing importance of reading to Scottish people during this period is clear, providing a valuable insight into Scottish minds and attitudes two centuries ago.

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Digital resources

- British Library Integrated Catalogue, <http://catalogue.bl.uk/>
- British Museum, <http://www.britishmuseum.org/>
- Edinburgh Bookshelf, <http://edinburghbookshelf.org.uk/>
- Eighteenth Century Short Title Catalogue (ESTC) on CD-ROM (London, 1992)
- English Short Title Catalogue, <http://estc.bl.uk/>
- Library History Database, <http://www.r-alston.co.uk/contents.htm>
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- Nineteenth century short title catalogue (NSTC). Series 1 & 2: 1801–1870 on CD-ROM (Newcastle, 2002)
- Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/>
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- ScotlandsPeople, <http://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/>
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- Statistical Accounts of Scotland, <http://edina.ac.uk/stat-acc-scot/>
- Studies in Bibliography, <http://etext.virginia.edu/bsuva/sb>

APPENDIX 1: CREATION OF DATABASES

A number of databases were created during this research. The MySQL relational database system was used: this runs on MacOS X, Windows, Linux and Unix systems. MySQL was used rather than Access because it is more flexible (able to handle larger text fields) and also because MySQL runs on the MacOS X computer used throughout this research. However it would be possible to import the databases into Access and retain almost all of the significant content.

Copies of each database are included on the Appendix 2 CD. These are in two formats: firstly a MySQL backup (dump) file for each database which can be imported directly into a MySQL system to recreate all the tables automatically; and secondly CSV format files for each table which can be imported to recreate the databases in Access. Field names of the tables are included in the first row of each CSV file.

Gray Library borrowings database

This database consists of three linked tables: borrowings, books and readers.

The borrowings table was derived from a transcript of the library's borrowing register, including date of borrowing, title borrowed (as recorded), name of borrower and any extra information recorded about them, (occasionally) who they borrowed the book for, and source reference and page number for the borrowing. This information was extended by adding a unique BorrowingID field, computing the day of the week, and adding links to title and borrower in the other two tables.

The books table was based on the library's 1828 printed catalogue which included the author and title of a book, its date of publication, and format. For this research a subject field was added, and used to categorise the subjects of each book borrowed. Having a

separate table for books meant it was necessary to categorise a book by subject only once, and then that categorisation could be linked to the borrowings table and thus apply to every time the book was borrowed.

The readers table was derived directly from the borrowing register, with a separate unique ReaderID field created for each identified borrower, as well as other fields for their surname, forenames, gender, occupation, birth date and death date if known, derived occupational class (e.g. Professionals, Merchants etc.), and a field for miscellaneous notes. It was only necessary to enter the information for each borrower once in this stand-alone table, and that information could then be linked to all of that reader's borrowings.

The borrowings table has 5163 rows; books 1399 rows; and readers 717 rows.

In MySQL the tables are linked in queries. For example the information about primary borrowers and books can be added to the borrowings table using the following query:

```
SELECT *
FROM borrowings, books, readers
WHERE (borrowings.LinkToTitle=books.CatalogueNumber AND
borrowings.LinkToBorrower=readers.ReaderID)
```

In Access the links between tables would normally have to be set up first:

```
borrowings: LinkToTitle -> books: CatalogueNumber
borrowings: LinkToBorrower -> readers: ReaderID
```

With this database structure a large range of SQL queries could be run, such as analysing the most popular books or subjects over time (for example in the 1750s, 1760s etc.), extracting borrowings of specific groups (for example professionals, or just teenage boys),

analysing borrowings based on social class, or working out how the daily use of the library changed over time.

For example the following query counts the most popular books among teenage boy borrowers:

```
SELECT LinkToTitle, Count(LinkToTitle)
FROM
(SELECT *
FROM borrowings, readers
WHERE ((borrowings.LinkToBorrower=readers.ReaderID
OR borrowings.LinkToOtherReader=readers.ReaderID)) AND
readers.AgeOfBorrower="teenage" AND readers.Gender="male") AS tmptable
GROUP by LinkToTitle
ORDER by Count(LinkToTitle) DESC
```

Selkirk Subscription Library borrowings database

Again this database consists of three linked tables: borrowings, books and readers.

The borrowings table was created directly from the library's borrowing records, although date information was not recorded in this database because borrowing date was not given consistently in the Selkirk records, and where it was it often could not be read reliably.

The books table for the Selkirk library is simpler than that for Gray Library, because there was no contemporary catalogue which could be used as the basis for the books portion of the database. Therefore the books table was derived directly from the borrowing records, with an entry for each different title borrowed, consisting solely of a unique book ID, the book's title and author if recorded, and the subject derived for it.

The readers table is similar to that for Gray Library, with an entry for each borrower.

The borrowings table has 11431 rows; books 612 rows; and readers 86 rows.

Information from the separate tables can be combined using a single SQL query:

```
SELECT *
FROM borrowings, books, readers
WHERE (borrowings.LinkToTitle=books.BookID
AND borrowings.LinkToBorrower=readers.ReaderID)
```

In Access the links between tables would normally have to be set up first:

```
borrowings: LinkToTitle -> books: BookID
borrowings: LinkToBorrower -> readers: ReaderID
```

The focus of the SQL queries performed on the Selkirk database was to work out the most popular titles and subjects borrowed. Because consistent date information was unavailable for this library it was not possible to run other queries to chart change over time.

Dumfriesshire book ownership database

The Dumfriesshire database is the simplest, being based on a single table derived from a single Excel spreadsheet summarising the book owners found in the inventories search. The owners table has 152 rows. Fields such as description and transcript summarised the information found in the inventories. Additional fields were added to aid the analysis, including decade (for example 1750s, 1760s etc.), address-type (village, rural or town), occupation, and whether there was a detailed listing of books, or a reference to book

furniture. Such additional fields allowed simple queries to be used to analyse date spread, and the different types of occupations present.

Meuros periodical purchases

This is another database based on three linked relational tables, this time used to study the purchases and purchasers of serial publications among Meuros's customers.

The customers table summarises Meuros's customers, including giving each one a unique ReaderID reference, then noting details of occupation and address if recorded. An additional field Gender allowed the purchases of female customers to be analysed.

The serials table has an entry for each serial mentioned in Meuros's account book, including a unique SerialID to identify it, its title, and type (e.g. almanack, army, local, review etc.).

Finally these tables are linked together using the purchases table, where each row includes the customer's ID, and the ID of the serial title they purchased. In addition it was necessary to add a third field giving every row a unique number, but this was only to satisfy the database's requirements for a unique way of identifying each row, rather than for any analysis.

The customers table has 82 rows; serials 61 rows; and purchases 217 rows.

Information from the separate tables can be combined using a single SQL query:


```
SELECT *  
FROM purchases, customers, serials  
WHERE (purchases.Customer=customers.ReaderID  
AND purchases.Title=serials.SerialID)
```

In Access the links between tables would normally have to be set up first:

```
purchases: Customer -> customers: ReaderID  
purchases: Title -> serials: SerialID
```

Queries were then run to analyse the most frequently sold periodicals, how they break down in terms of subject matter, and the periodical purchases of groups such as female customers and people with specific occupations. Some of these results were used directly in the main body of the thesis; others form the basis for more qualitative analysis there.